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INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS OF OLDER ADULTS
FAMILY STRUCTURE, CONTACT AND NORMS

The research reported in this thesis is based on data collected in the context of the research programs “Living Arrangements and Social Networks of Older Adults in the Netherlands” and “Longitudinal Aging Study Amsterdam,” which are conducted at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam and the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute in The Hague. They are funded by the Netherlands Program for Research on Ageing (NESTOR) and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports. The research was also supported by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO 410.12.019), which took place in the context of the research program “Diversity in Late Life.”

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VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT

INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS OF OLDER ADULTS
FAMILY STRUCTURE, CONTACT AND NORMS

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1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION

The relationships among kin have traditionally been regarded as one of the key determinants of social cohesion (McChesney & Bengtson, 1988). However, today's older people are growing older in intergenerational families that are different from those of their parents, in terms of both structure and the duration of family roles and relationships. This has led Shanas (1980, p. 14) to describe recent cohorts of older parents and their adult children as "the new pioneers of our era" who have "ventured into uncharted areas of human relationships." Towards the end of the 20th century, we have seen new family structures emerge—stepfamilies, cohabiting couples, single-parent families—all of which have made intergenerational relationships more complex and raised questions about the roles and responsibilities within these new family structures.

Within both social science research and the political arena, family issues are subject to an ongoing debate. Research on intergenerational relationships has for a long time been driven by concerns that the value of the extended family as a social institution is declining, that older people are becoming alienated from their kin, whether children contribute to the well-being of the older parent, and concerns about the impact of changing family structures (Mancini & Blieszner, 1989). Within the political arena, the concern has predominantly been on who will continue to support the growing number of tomorrow's older members of society. Will it be the government, the aged themselves, or their families? This concern for the welfare state is not new and has been increasing in recent years (Daatland & Lowenstein, 2005). The underlying question is whether the expansion of the welfare system has come to undermine the need for care and support from adult children.

The present study examined intergenerational relationships of older adults in the Netherlands at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century. Parent-child relationships have been studied during that period in life when both are adult members of society. More specifically, the focus is on independently living parents who are older than 55 years. The aim is to understand the conditions under which parents and their adult children have contact and exchange support. The study is organized around specific themes, which were chosen because of their significance for understanding current relationships between older parents and their children: family structure, contact patterns, and norms. More specifically, with respect to family structure, the focus is on various forms of stepfamilies. Contact patterns concern both contact frequency and the support that is exchanged between parents and adult children. Finally, norms pertain to the filial expectations of parents.

The following four research questions have been addressed in the present study:

- 1 *To what extent does family structure have an effect on the contact between (step)parents and their adult biological and stepchildren?(Chapter 2)*
- 2 *Has the frequency of contact and support exchanged in relationships between parents and adult children changed over individual time and over successive cohorts?(Chapter 3)*
- 3 *To what extent are there variations in the filial responsibility expectations of parents in later life? (Chapter 4)*
- 4 *To what extent can the relationship between child contact and support and parental well-being be explained by filial expectations? (Chapter 5)*

In the next section of this chapter, a number of social and demographic changes that have had a major influence on family relationships will be addressed. The following section describes the relationship between family solidarity and social solidarity. This is followed by a brief description of the research design and data. In the final section, an outline of the contents of the chapters of this thesis is provided.

SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

During the last century, a number of social and demographic changes have had a profound and dramatic affect on the structure of families and relationships between parents and their adult children, e.g., the increase in life expectancy, decline in birth rate, and increasing instability of partner relationships.

As in most other western countries, life expectancy has risen in the Netherlands. For people born at the beginning of the twentieth century, just over half of the men and two-thirds of the women survived beyond the age of 65. However, among the cohorts born in the 1960s, 85% of men and 89% of women are expected to survive beyond the age of 65 (Liefbroer & Dykstra, 2000). Never before in history have parents and children spent such a prolonged length of time together as adults, and even as older adults. Parents and children can have as much as 60 years of joint life together (De Jong Gierveld & Dykstra, 2006).

Another demographic change that has influenced intergenerational structures is the decline in birth rate. In the past century, average family size has declined dramatically. Whereas Dutch women born between 1935 and 1940 had an average of 2.4 children, those born between 1965 and 1970 are expected to have an average of 1.8 children. Moreover, women born after 1944 are delaying the birth of their first child (Bosveld, 1996).

Alongside the demographic changes that modulate the structure of intergenerational relationships, changes in marriage patterns have led to changes in family networks. The structure of families has become more complex as a result of the increase in divorce and

remarriage or repartnering. Moreover, the labor-force participation of women, who are predominantly seen as the family care-givers, has increased (Social and Cultural Planning Office, 2000), although this occurred relatively late in the Netherlands. Furthermore, co-residence of older people with their children, still quite high in some southern European countries, is uncommon in the Netherlands, which has one of the lowest proportions of older parents living with their adult children (Tomassini et al., 2004). These changes and their specific influence on relationships between older parents and adult children will be addressed more in chapters 2 and 3.

In sum, while nuclear families have become smaller as fertility has declined, families have also become more diverse, with gains in life expectancy leading to more multi-generational families (Bengtson, 2001). Divorce, remarriage, and cohabitation, all more common now than half a century ago, add further complexity to intergenerational relationships.

FAMILY SOLIDARITY AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

The concept of *solidarity* is used to refer to collective relationships at the level of society and also to evoke practices of reciprocity and mutual assistance at the family and kinship level (Martin, 2004). This concept allows us to establish bonds between the two levels and may therefore be a relevant tool for analyzing contemporary social relationships.

Traditionally, the family has been considered an important cornerstone of a society built around solidarity (Komter & Vollebergh, 2002). In this respect, the family is regarded as the prototype of Durkheim's mechanical solidarity (Durkheim, 1967), with the family being a strong social community based on shared norms and values and consisting of members with a natural function to help and care for each other. Family solidarity structurally pertains to both circles of the family: the nuclear and the extended family (Knijn, 2004). The debate on family decline with respect to intergenerational adult relationships has primarily focused on the decline in intergenerational coresidence. In this view, the structural isolation of the nuclear family from extended relatives (i.e., kin who do not belong to the household) has a negative influence on intergenerational relationships (Popenoe, 1993). However, prior studies on intergenerational relationships reveal that adult children are not isolated from their parents but have frequent contact and exchange support with them, even when they do not coreside (Mancini & Blieszner, 1989). This family form has also been described as the "modified extended family" (Shanas, 1979), a particularly modern family form that is not built upon coresidence but where residential proximity, visiting, and exchange of support between adult children and their parents are prevalent.

Social scientists and politicians who are critical of the welfare state encourage the idea that welfare states emerge at the expense of family solidarity; they fear atomization, fragmentation, and a loss of social cohesion (Knijn, 2004). One line of thought assumes that

the family and welfare state substitute for each other when it comes to the provision of support. This *substitution* thesis holds that when the state provides care, family solidarity declines. This has also been referred to as the “crowding out” hypothesis (Künemund & Rein, 1999). When social services are available, families will withdraw, will be substituted or crowded out, thereby fostering social isolation and anomie, which, in turn, leads to a general decline in social norms (Putnam, 2000).

An alternative position is that families reduce their responsibilities if they have the opportunity to do so, but without withdrawing completely. The emphasis here is on *complementarity*. Services are seen as a supplement to family support. Older people are more willing to accept support and have less of a feeling of burdening the family, and families are more willing to provide support (Chappell & Blandford, 1991). Another form of complementarity is *family specialization* (Lyons, Zarit & Townsend, 2000) or *task-specific* complementarity (Litwak, 1985). Families and public services provide different kinds of support. Families concentrate on emotional support, and public services, on instrumental support.

The “crowding out” thesis has recently been challenged by family sociologists who point to the complex and even mutually reinforcing relationship between family solidarity and public welfare services (Künemund & Rein, 1999; Motel-Klingebiel, Tesch-Roemer, & Von Kondratowitz, 2005; Van Oorschot & Arts, 2005). Based on a comparative study on the type and intensity of help that older people receive from their children, Künemund & Rein (1999) find support for what they describe as “crowding in”: generous welfare systems that give resources to older people increase family solidarity rather than undermining it. In another study, on the informal and formal provision of help and support, Motel-Klingebiel et al. (2005) find further support for the “crowding in” hypothesis. The authors conclude that, particularly in societies with well-developed social services, public and family support systems act cumulatively, which also supports the complementarity hypothesis.

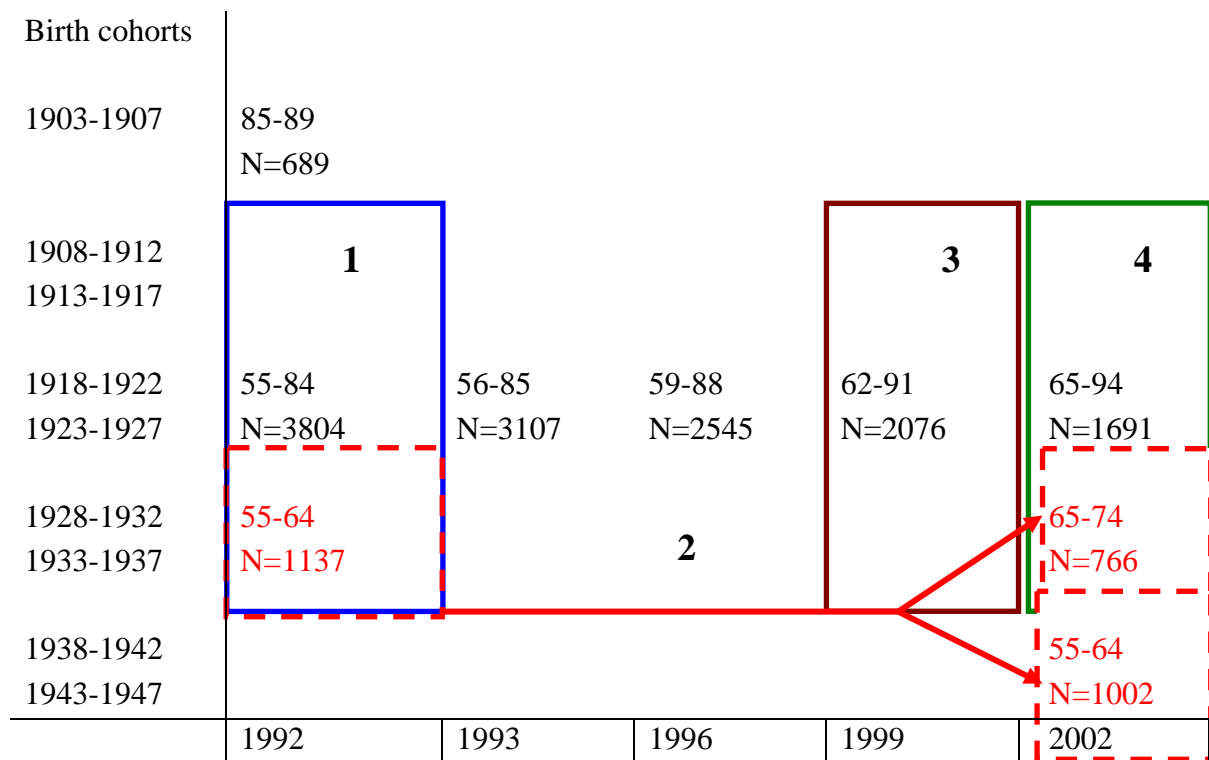
The debate on the relationship between welfare state and family has emerged against the background of the idea that the state (social solidarity) has taken over the functions that the family refuses or is no longer willing to perform. This negative view of the family is implicit in the arguments of contemporary proponents of the withdrawal of the welfare state.

The discussion on the interrelationship between social services and services provided within the context of the family could be improved by a (re)conceptualization of the family. This study will contribute to this discussion by examining various aspects of intergenerational relationships at the family level, such as the contact within step-relationships, changes over time and cohorts, and expectations of filial responsibility. The four questions in this study have been addressed by placing them within a well-developed welfare state: the Netherlands.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA

To examine parent-child relationships in later life, data are used from two surveys in the Netherlands: “Living Arrangements and Social Networks of Older Adults in the Netherlands” (LSN) and a successive longitudinal survey, called “Longitudinal Aging Study Amsterdam” (LASA). LSN and LASA describe the Dutch population aged 55 years and older and started in 1992 with data collection among a representative sample. The design of LSN and LASA are presented in Figure 1. While LSN focused mainly on the demographic and social characteristics of older adults, LASA was directed to four domains of functioning, i.e., social, emotional, physical, and cognitive. LASA applied a multiple-point prospective panel design; however, the same data were not collected at every observation. Within the rich database available, we have looked for the best fit between the research question at hand and one or more specific observations. For this thesis, data from the baseline examination (1992) of LSN were used to answer research question 1 (Chapter 2) since we had information available on all intergenerational relationships. To answer research question 2 (Chapter 3), we addressed both longitudinal and cohort changes; a new cohort aged 55-64 years (2002) was used along with the baseline cohort (1992 data collection) and its longitudinal follow-up in 2002. The third follow-up (1999) was used to address research question 3 (Chapter 4) since we had two measurement instruments of filial responsibility expectations available, i.e., a vignette technique and item scale. The fourth follow-up (2002) was used to answer research question 4 (Chapter 5). Here, we had data available on filial responsibility expectations and on specific characteristics of all children and their relationships with the older adults. The data sets are described in more detail in the empirical chapters of this study. More information on the LSN study can be found in Knipscheer et al. (1995) and on the aims of LASA in Deeg, Knipscheer, and Van Tilburg (1993).

Figure 1.1 Design of the Study



OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

Researchers within sociology, social psychology, and allied fields have employed a variety of theories and conceptual perspectives in regard to intergenerational relationships (see reviews by Bengtson & Schrader, 1982; Streib & Beck, 1980; Mancini & Blieszner, 1989). Together these studies offer a picture of the type of dimensions that play a role in the solidarity between parents and children. In this study, we follow Bengtson and Schrader (1982), who identified the following six key issues in the study of parents and their relationships with their adult children: (1) affectional quality of relationships, (2) patterns of contact, (3) consensus and similarity, (4) exchanges of instrumental and emotional support, (5) norms and expectations, and (6) family structure. In this study, the focus is on three of the six issues, namely, family structure, patterns of contact, and norms and expectations.

The first question, the extent to which family structure has an effect on the contact between (step)parents and their adult biological and stepchildren, is addressed in Chapter 2. This study describes the family structure of older parents and their adult biological children and stepparents and their stepchildren. Moreover, the study examined the effect of family structure on the contact between (1) parents and their biological children, and (2) stepparents and their stepchildren.

Chapter 3 continues with an examination of the changes in contact and support exchanged between parents and adult children over individual time and over successive cohorts (research question 2). The main question is whether, and if so, to which extent the individual consequences of structural changes are related to contact and exchanges of support between parents and adult children. Specifically, three major structural aspects are examined: divorce, labor-force participation of women, and geographical proximity in parent-child residential location.

The third research question about what filial expectations parents have in later life is addressed in Chapter 4. This chapter is primarily concerned with dimensions of filial expectations and the extent to which different measures of filial expectations produce convergent findings.

Finally, the influence of filial expectations on the relationship between child contact and support and parental well-being are examined in Chapter 5. The main question is whether the relationship between the contact and support received from adult children and parental well-being can be explained by the filial responsibility expectations of older parents.

After the four empirical chapters, the study ends in Chapter 6 with a summary of the most important findings and some general conclusions. The final chapter also raises some points of discussion and the resulting implications for future research.

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**THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY STRUCTURE ON THE CONTACT
BETWEEN OLDER PARENTS AND THEIR ADULT BIOLOGICAL
CHILDREN AND STEPCHILDREN IN THE NETHERLANDS**

S. van der Pas, & T.G. van Tilburg (*submitted*)

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the effect that family structure has on the contact between older (step)parents and their adult (step)children. A comparison is made between three family structures: biological families, simple stepfamilies and complex stepfamilies. The sample consists of respondents aged 55 or over from the “Living Arrangements and Social Networks of Older Adults in the Netherlands” survey of 1992. The contact in biological relationships and steprelationships is measured by means of two items: contact frequency, and the extent to which the contact is perceived as regular and important. Parents have less contact with their biological children in stepfamilies, compared to parents with their children in biological families. The contact with biological children is perceived as more often regular and important in biological families and complex stepfamilies compared to simple stepfamilies. No difference was found in the contact between stepparents and stepchildren in simple and complex stepfamilies. However, the contact with stepchildren is perceived as more often regular and important in simple stepfamilies in comparison to complex stepfamilies. It is not so much the difference between biological and stepchildren that counts when studying the contact between (step)parents and (step)children, as what the structure of the aging (step)family is.

INTRODUCTION

Western societies have witnessed profound demographic changes over the past few decades, changes that have influenced the structure of the family, shaping relationships between older parents and adult children. In particular, as a result of the rise in divorce and relatively high remarriage rates, more complex family structures have become more common. An increasing proportion of older adults have experienced diverse marital transitions (Wachter, 1995), which have affected the availability and structure of their kinship networks (De Jong Gierveld & Dykstra, 2002). Remarriage or repartnership, particularly when parents have both biological and stepchildren, creates a new family structure where family norms and obligations are less clearly defined and understood than in first-marriage families. This lack of institutionalized guidelines for remarried or repartnered families can lead to uncertainty regarding relationships with and obligations to new and former kin (Cherlin, 1978).

Research on intergenerational relationships beyond the household has repeatedly shown that older parents have regular contact and receive a substantial amount of social support from their biological adult children (Mancini & Blieszner, 1989). However, we know very little about later life stepfamilies. Stepfamilies have been viewed as “incomplete institutions” (Cherlin, 1978), “deviant or deficit family forms” (Coleman & Ganong, 1997), or “reconstituted nuclear families” (Levin, 1997). In this respect, the idealized model of the nuclear family has functioned as the implicit standard for a long time. Steprelationships are generally considered to be more ambiguous than biological parent-child ties (Ganong & Coleman, 2004), and adult stepchildren are believed to have fewer obligations towards stepparents than towards biological parents (Ganong & Coleman, 2006), resulting in less mutual contact compared to biological relationships.

Although comparisons have been made in previous studies between biological children and stepchildren (e.g., White, 1994), they are seldom explicitly based on comparisons *within* families. Understanding stepfamilies relationships also requires knowledge of the contact between parents and biological and stepchildren in the same family. In other words, the contact between parents and biological and stepchildren does not stand on its own but is influenced by the structure of the family in general. Until now, the family structure of older parents and their biological and stepchildren has not been widely examined.

In this study, we first describe the family structure of older parents and their biological children and stepparents and their stepchildren. We then address the question of the extent to which family structure has an effect on the contact between (1) parents and their biological children, and (2) stepparents and their stepchildren. We examine two forms of contact, namely contact frequency, and the extent to which the contact is perceived as regular and important. Of particular interest is the contact with biological children in stepfamilies in contrast with biological children in biological families, and the variation in contact between stepparents and stepchildren within different stepfamily types.

A stepfamily can be formed in many ways and can be defined as a family in which at least one of the adults has children from a previous relationship. To get a better understanding of the complexity of stepfamilies, researchers have identified different typologies of stepfamilies based on (among other things) the presence or absence of children from the present union, residence of children from prior unions, and the age of the children (see further, Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Our aim is to provide a differentiated picture of later-life stepfamilies by describing the family structure of older (step)parents, comparing three main types of families: First, in a *biological family*, the couple is in their first union (or one or both parents have had a previous union which has ended due to widowhood or divorce) and only have biological children. Second, a *complex stepfamily* is a stepfamily that is formed when parents, each with children from a prior union, start a new relationship. Third, a *simple stepfamily* is a stepfamily formed when one of the parents has children from a prior union. Within stepfamilies, a further differentiation can be made with those who have shared biological children.

Within a stepfamily, the parent can enter either as parent or stepparent, depending on whether he or she already has children from a prior union and whether the new partner brings children to the union. Because we rely on the information of only one of the parents, this has consequences for the description of the simple stepfamily (Table 2.1). The individual is either a parent with children from a prior union (who has a partner who is the stepparent) or is the stepparent (with a partner who has children from a prior union).

Previous research is mixed on the extent to which family structure influences the contact between parents and their adult biological and stepchildren. One of the few examples of research based on the reports of older parents on later-life non-resident step-relationships is a study conducted by Pezzin and Steinberg Schone (1999), who observed that the amount of care that a parent received from a child varied by family structure. Parents with only stepchildren were less likely to receive care from children than parents with only biological children or parents with both biological and stepchildren. Based on the reports of adult children, White (1992) observed that remarried parents have less contact with both biological and stepchildren, compared to first-marriage parents with no stepchildren. In contrast, in a study where the support given and received from the households of both parents was combined for adult children of divorced and remarried parents, there were no significant differences by family structure in exchanges between parents and adult children (Amato et al., 1995).

Table 2.1

Different Family Structures According to Relationship Type of the Respondent or Partner

Family Structure	Perspective Respondent		Perspective Partner	
	Biological Child	Stepchild	Biological Child	Stepchild
Biological	CU ^a			
Complex	FU ^b Respondent	FU Partner	FU Partner	FU Respondent
- Complex with shared biological children	FU Respondent & CU	FU Partner	FU Partner & CU	FU Respondent
Simple (without stepchildren)	FU Respondent			FU Respondent
- Simple with shared biological children	FU Respondent & CU		CU	FU Respondent
Simple (with stepchildren)		FU Partner	FU Partner	
- Simple with shared biological children	CU	FU Partner	FU Partner & CU	

Note: The current study focuses on one of the individuals in a partner relationship. He or she is denoted here as the respondent. The partner concerns the current partner or for single respondents the partner with whom the respondent had the last union.

^a Current union.

^b Former union.

Stepfamilies formed when children are minors have different experiences from those formed when children are grown up (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). The younger children are, the longer the lifespan the remarried or repartnered parent and children share together. Moreover, it is reasonable to assume that adult stepchildren have not co-habited with their stepfamilies whereas young stepchildren most probably have spent some time cohabiting with their stepfamily. Parents with stepchildren who entered the stepfamily as minors might therefore have more contact with their stepchildren than parents with stepchildren who were already (or nearly) adult.

Having a shared biological child in a stepfamily may also affect the contact between parents and (step)children. Ganong and Coleman (1994) have referred to such a biological child in a stepfamily as a “concrete baby,” cementing the stepfamily relationships. Because the stepfamily members have a blood relative in common, the ambiguity in step-roles may lessen and the commitment to each other may increase (Cherlin, 1978). In contrast, Flinn (1988) suggests that the birth of a child in a stepfamily reduces contact with stepchildren, with parents favoring the biological offspring over stepchildren. However, MacDonald and DeMaris (1996) found no difference in contact between parents and stepchildren, whether there were shared biological children or not.

Because of changes in family formation and dissolution, a growing number of adults will experience the life-course transitions of marriage, divorce, and remarriage during their lifetime, which will have an impact on parent-child relationships (Aquilino, 1994a). In this study, both the current marital status and marital history of older parents are considered. The contact between parents and biological children is influenced by parents’ marital status, and previous studies have shown that parents and children within the *biological* family have more contact than parents and children within stepfamilies (Amato, Rezac & Booth, 1995). Divorce has a negative effect on contact, regardless of the age of the children when the divorce occurred (Aquilino, 1994b; Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1990), and following divorce, father-child relationships are less close than mother-child relationships (Webster & Herzog, 1995). The contact between parents and children is contingent on the gender of both parents and children (Silversten & Bengtson, 1997).

In addition, remarriage further affects the parent-child relationship. Nowadays most remarriages follow a divorce, although remarriage after widowhood has been common for a long time (Coleman, Ganong & Fine, 2000). Post-divorce stepfamilies have different experiences from those formed after the death of a spouse (Aquilino, 1994a). Previous studies – mostly on parents with young children – suggest that divorce means competing roles and, therefore, less contact with the stepparent than when the biological parent has been widowed. Specifically, parents who remarry when their children are minors have less contact with their adult children than non-divorced parents do (Aquilino, 1994b), but more contact than divorced parents who do not remarry (White, 1992). Mothers who have remarried have more frequent contact with children than remarried fathers do (Amato et al., 1995).

METHODS

Respondents

Data were available for older people who participated in the “Living Arrangements and Social Networks of Older Adults” research program (Knipscheer, De Jong Gierveld, Van Tilburg & Dykstra, 1995). The program used a stratified random sample of men and women born between 1903 and 1937. The sample was taken from the population registers of 11 municipalities that represent differences in religion and urbanization in the Netherlands. The oldest individuals in these areas (the oldest men, in particular) were over-represented in the sample. Of the 7279 eligible individuals in the sample, 2785 (38%) were unwilling to participate because of a lack of interest or time; another 1079 were ineligible because of death or they were too ill or cognitively impaired to be interviewed. The survey was carried out in 1992 with a total of 4494 respondents interviewed in their homes. Respondents born in 1908 or later were followed up in 1992-1993 (T2; $N = 3107$), 1995-1996 (T3; $N = 2545$), 1998-1999 (T4; $N = 2076$), and 2001-2002 (T5; $N = 1691$) in the context of the Longitudinal Aging Study Amsterdam (LASA) (Deeg, Knipscheer & Van Tilburg, 1993). These follow-ups were only used when respondents did not identify their stepchildren at baseline.

For 11 respondents we had no data on the existence of children, and for 238 parents (M age = 81.1, $SD = 7.7$) the interviews had to be shortened or broken off because of frailty, resulting in no data on the characteristics of children. In the present study, the following respondents were not included: those who had no children ($N = 643$; M age = 74.5, $SD = 10.2$) and those who had one or more children living in the parental home ($N = 521$; M age = 64.9, $SD = 9.2$) including 19 respondents with both biological and stepchildren) due to the fact that co-residing biological and stepchildren have daily contact with (step)parents. Furthermore, 50 parents with a partner status or marital history that deviated from the study were not included. These included 36 married parents (M age = 70.5, $SD = 9.0$) who did not co-habit with their spouse for various reasons, predominantly due to the institutionalization of the spouse, five parents who had never been partnered, four parents who had not been married before the current partnership, two parents who cohabited before the current marriage and three respondents who did not have a partner and of whom the marital history was unknown. Moreover, 58 parents who were living-apart-together were not included because we were unable to determine whether parents who are (re)married or cohabiting have previously had ‘live apart together’ arrangements. Also, within living-apart-together relationships, partners maintain separate households, which may have a different effect on the contact with biological children and stepchildren than (re)married or cohabiting parents. Finally, 189 parents (M age = 83.9, $SD = 4.8$) living in nursing or residential homes were excluded, as their contact with their children is not comparable to that of elderly individuals living independently.

The final sample consisted of 2756 respondents (1339 men and 1417 women), between 54 and 89 years of age (M age = 72.5, SD = 9.2). In total, data from 8891 relationships with children were analyzed.

Measures

The contact between older parents and stepparents and their (step)children was measured for each relationship separately. Preceding the questions on contact, an identification question was asked to obtain information on having children.

Identification of children. —At baseline, the identification of children followed a two-step procedure. First, the number of children was assessed by means of the question: “How many children have you had? You should consider not only the children whose natural mother (father) you are, but also step and adoptive children.” In the second step, data were collected for each child: names and gender; whether the child was a biological, step, or adoptive child; and whether the child was deceased. The identification of all children was repeated at T5 with a similar questionnaire. Furthermore, at each observation children could be additionally identified by means of the network delineation (see below). Not all children were identified at baseline. Specifically, three biological children of one respondent were identified at one of the follow-up observations. Of the 376 stepchildren 144 were identified at one of the follow-up observations. These stepchildren are all from the union with which the respondent had a relationship with at baseline. Therefore, although some parents did have stepchildren at baseline they may not have identified them until one of the follow-ups. Of the parents who did not identify their stepchildren on the first observation, 65% were part of a complex stepfamily compared to 35% parents in a simple stepfamily ($n = 148$; $\chi^2 = 3.88$; $p < .05$). Of those who did identify their stepchildren on the first observation, 48% were part of a complex stepfamily compared to 52% parents in a simple stepfamily.

Contact frequency. —The frequency of contact was assessed by the question: “How often are you in touch with ...?” The choice of answers was: never, once a year or less, few times a year, once a month, once a fortnight, once a week, few times a week, and every day. These categories were assigned numeric values from 1 to 8 ($M = 6.0$, $SD = 1.6$). For the stepchildren not identified at baseline, the missing data on contact frequency were imputed by the first available follow-up observation. The contact frequency within those relationships with stepchildren did not differ from the contact frequency within the relationships with other stepchildren, controlled for demographic characteristics ($t_{(366)} = 1.7$, $p < .10$).

Regular and important contact. —The question on the extent to which respondents perceive contact to be regular and important was posed as part of delineating the personal network. To obtain adequate information on their networks, respondents were asked to identify their personal network members by name (Van Tilburg, 1995). For children, the following question

was asked: “Earlier in the interview you provided the names of all your living children. We would like to know with which children you have regular contact and who are also important to you. Could you name them one at a time, by their first name and the initial letter of their surname?” Respondents were restricted to identifying only persons above the age of 18.

Family structure. —The following characteristics were included: dummy variables for the type of family structure, moment of formation of stepfamily, whether there were shared biological children in the stepfamily, and the total number of biological and stepchildren. Concerning the moment of formation of the stepfamily, we examined the age of the stepchildren when they entered the stepfamily (whether they were minors, i.e., 15 years old or younger, or adults).

Parent characteristics. —We examined the age and current and previous marital status as control variables. With respect to current marital status, we distinguished between respondents who were married (first marriage and remarried), cohabiting, and single. For the previous marital status, we looked at whether the respondent had ever been divorced.

Relationship characteristics. —We also examined children’s age, gender dyads, and traveling time between the respondent and the child as control variables. Children’s age was included as difference from parent’s age to avoid multicollinearity problems. Gender dyads were distinguished with both same-sex and opposite-sex parent-child dyads.

Procedure

Descriptive analyses were used to indicate both the differences between parents and between (step)children within different family structures. Furthermore, the aim of this study was to gain both insight in the influence of family structure on contact between parents and their (step)children and at the same time take into account the differences between biological and stepchildren. Therefore, we applied hierarchical multilevel regression analysis (MLn) (Rasbash & Woodhouse, 1995) with variables from different levels (children and the relationships with their parents nested within the parents) analyzed simultaneously; the statistical model includes the various dependencies. Analyses pertained to scores of contact frequency as the dependent variable in a linear model. Furthermore, analyses were performed with the probability of whether the contact was perceived as regular and important in logistic models.

Of all the children, adopted children were not included in the analyses. In total 11 parents who also had biological or stepchildren had an adopted child; seven parents had one adopted child and four parents had two adopted children. Furthermore, the following characteristics were included in the equations: type of family structure, moment of formation of the stepfamily, and whether there are shared biological children in the stepfamily. The total number of children was also added because this could also influence the contact between (step)parent and biological and stepchildren (Uhlenberg & Cooney, 1990).

Parent and relationship characteristics were taken into account as control variables. A greater age difference between respondents and children could increase the contact frequency (Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997). Moreover, children often identify more strongly with the parent of the same sex (Aquilino, 1994a; Lee, Dwyer & Coward, 1993); specifically, the mother-daughter relationship is found to be closer than other dyad types. Furthermore, a larger traveling distance could provide less opportunity for contact between respondents and their children.

RESULTS

Description of the family structure

The great majority of parents were part of a traditional nuclear family with only biological children (Table 2.2). More important, we observed that in this sample 12% were part of a stepfamily. Each stepfamily type, except for the complex stepfamily with shared biological children, was represented by a substantial number of parents. Furthermore, we found that the majority of the parents within the traditional nuclear family were married, with a third having become single primarily due to widowhood. Within the stepfamilies, most of the parents were also married. However, particularly within the complex stepfamilies, there were also a considerable number of parents who cohabited. Moreover, within the stepfamilies ($n = 331$) 58% of the parents had been widowed, and 45% had been divorced. The majority of these parents were in their second relationship; 72% within simple stepfamilies and 79% within complex stepfamilies. However 11% of the parents in complex stepfamilies were in their third relationship compared to 6% of the parents in simple stepfamilies. Overall, the results show that there was great diversity within the different family structures, including the marital status and marital history of the parents within the different family structures.

In Table 2.3, we describe the adult (step)children within the different family structures. Of the 333 respondents in stepfamilies, there were 185 who did not have stepchildren. For these families, we did not assess the time at which the stepfamily was formed. Within 69 (47%) of the remaining 148 stepfamilies, the youngest stepchild joined the focal parent's family when he or she was 15 years of age or younger. In the complex stepfamilies, it was more common for children to enter as adults, compared to the simple stepfamilies ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 4.7, p < .05$). Whether stepchildren joined the focal parent's family as a child or as an adult was related to the current marital status of the (step)parent ($\chi^2_{(2)} = 20.5, p < .001$). Entrance of a stepchild as an adult was observed more often among respondents cohabiting with a partner (92%), compared to respondents who had remarried (47%) and those who had remained single (40%). Entrance of a child as a minor or an adult was also related to a history of widowhood or divorce of the respondent ($\chi^2_{(2)} = 7.9, p < .05$).

Table 2.2

Description of Older Parents within the Different Family Structures

Family Structure	N Parents		Marital Status			Marital History		
	abs.	%	Married	Cohabiting	Single	1 st Marriage	Divorce	Widowhood
Biological ^a	2423	88	1637	0	786	1619	87	716
Complex ^b	72	3	33	23	16	0	27	36
- Complex with shared biological children	9	0	5	0	4	0	3	6
Simple ^c (without stepchildren)	142	5	57	29	56	0	58	59
- Simple with shared biological children	43	2	21	1	21	0	14	22
Simple (with stepchildren)	45	2	23	3	19	17	7	21
- Simple with shared biological children	22	1	12	0	10	10	2	10

^a Family with biological children only.

^b Stepfamily formed when parents, each with children from a prior union, start a new relationship.

^c Stepfamily formed when one of the parents has children from a prior union.

Divorce +
Widowhood

Table 2.3

Description of (Step)Children within the Different Family Structures

Family Structure	Entrance Stepchild (abs.)			<i>M</i> Children (1-17, <i>SD</i> = 1.9)		
	Minor	Adult		Biological, nonshared	Biological, shared	Step
Biological ^a	- ^b	-		-	3.2	-
Complex ^c	23	48		2.6	-	2.7
- Complex with shared biological children	8	1		1.8	1.8	1.8
Simple ^d (without stepchildren)	-	-		2.6	-	-
- Simple with shared biological children	-	-		2.2	2.0	-
Simple (with stepchildren)	19	26		-	-	2.7
- Simple with shared biological children	19	3		-	2.4	1.9

^a Family with biological children only.

^b A dash means that this situation cannot occur.

^c Stepfamily formed when parents, each with children from a prior union, start a new relationship. For one respondent the entrance of the youngest stepchild is not known.

^d Stepfamily formed when one of the parents has children from a prior union.

The stepchildren entered as adults in only 29% of the cases of respondents in their first marriage, in contrast to 62% in the case of respondents who had been previously divorced and 56% where respondents had been widowed. A first marriage with a partner who already has children is primarily formed earlier in the life course of the individual, in contrast to divorced or widowed respondents, where a stepfamily is formed later in the life course.

With respect to the total number of children, compared to other family types, the complex stepfamilies tended to have the largest average total number of children (Table 2.3). Both partners have children from a prior union; for some complex stepfamilies shared children further increase the number of children. The simple stepfamilies without shared biological children had the lowest average total number of children.

Contact between parents and biological children

Before we answer the research question on the influence of family structure on the contact between parents and children, we compared biological and stepchildren. On a scale from 1 to 8 the average contact frequency was lower with stepchildren (estimated frequency = 5.3, $t = -8.4$, $p < .001$) than with biological children (estimate = 6.1). Moreover, the contact with stepchildren was perceived as less regular and less important (probability = .62; OR = 0.30, Wald = 53.5, $p < .001$) than contact with biological children (probability = .85).

Table 2.4 shows the results of the regression of contact in biological relationships (left column) and of contact in steprelationships (right column). The results are discussed with respect to the consequences that family structure, parent, and relationship characteristics have on the contact between the respondent and either their biological or stepchildren. On the basis of the regression equations, we computed estimates for different types of family structure, controlling for the parent and relationship characteristics.

Turning first to the results on biological children, we observed that respondents in complex stepfamilies ($B = -.47$; estimate = 5.6) and within simple stepfamilies ($B = -.44$; estimate = 5.6) had less frequent contact with biological children than respondents in biological families (category of reference; estimate = 6.0). Moreover, respondents in biological families (category of reference; estimated probability of being identified as a network member = .85) and complex stepfamilies (OR = 1.13; probability = .87) perceived the contact to be more often regular and important than those in simple stepfamilies (OR = 0.47; probability = .73). The contact with biological children was not affected by whether the children were minors when the stepfamily was formed or by the presence of shared biological children. However, keeping in mind the fact that stepfamilies often consist of a larger total number of children, we observed that respondents with a larger total number of biological and stepchildren had less contact with their biological children than those with fewer children. This contact was also perceived as less regular and important.

Table 2.4

Linear and Logistic Multilevel Model Results Predicting Contact Frequency and Extent to Which Contact Is Perceived as Regular and Important with Biological and Stepchildren

	Biological Children		Stepchildren	
	Contact Frequency ^a <i>N</i> = 8509	Regular and Important ^b <i>N</i> = 8316	Contact Frequency ^a <i>N</i> = 368	Regular and Important ^b <i>N</i> = 364
Constant	B 7.31 ***	OR 106.91 ***	B 7.07 ***	OR 104.69 **
<i>Family Structure</i>				
Complex ^c	-0.47 **	1.13	-0.07	0.30 **
Simple (vs. Biological)	-0.44 ***	0.47 ***		
Stepfamily formed when children were minors	0.05	0.78	0.02	0.57
Shared biological children in stepfamily	0.33	1.55	0.05	0.76
Total number of biological and stepchildren (1-17)	-0.13 ***	0.73 ***	-0.08	0.96
<i>Parent Characteristics</i>				
Current Union				
- Cohabiting (vs. Married)	-0.52 **	0.92	-0.49	0.32 *
- Single (vs. Married)	0.08	1.05	-0.29	1.19
Ever Divorced	-0.75 ***	0.54 **	-0.04	1.95
Age (54-89 years)	-0.02 ***	0.97 ***	-0.03	0.94 *

Relationship Characteristics

Gender

- Father-Daughter (vs. Father-Son)	0.18 ***	1.09	0.45	0.92
- Mother-Son (vs. Father-Son)	0.03	0.79	-0.21	0.32 *
- Mother-Daughter (vs. Father-Son)	0.51 ***	1.28	-0.21	0.48
Age Difference Parent-Child (-64 to 1 years) ^d	-0.03 ***	0.98 **	-0.03 *	0.93 ***
Travelling Time (0–24 hours)	-0.12 ***	0.94 ***	-0.08 ***	0.94 *

Note: For contact frequency with biological children, unconditional model deviance = 29850.3; conditional model deviance = 28549.4; $\chi^2_{(15)} = 1300.9^{***}$. For perceiving the contact with biological children as regular and important, unconditional model deviance = 5980.4; conditional model deviance = 4477.8; $\chi^2_{(15)} = 1502.5^{***}$. For contact frequency with stepchildren, unconditional model deviance = 1452.3, conditional model deviance = 1415.5; $\chi^2_{(13)} = 36.9^{***}$. For perceiving the contact with stepchildren children as regular and important, unconditional model deviance = 469.1, conditional model deviance = 386.496; $\chi^2_{(13)} = 82.6^{***}$.

^a Possible answers were (1) *never*, (2) *once a year or less*, (3) *few times a year*, (4) *once a month*, (5) *once a fortnight*, (6) *once a week*, (7) *few times a week*, (8) *every day*.

^b Possible values are (0) *no*, (1) *yes*.

^c Among biological children vs. biological family. Among stepchildren vs. simple family.

^d Computed as 0 - Age Parent + Age Child.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Considering the characteristics of the parents, we observed that cohabiting respondents had less contact with their biological children, compared to married and single respondents. When the respondent had been formerly divorced, there was also less contact with the biological child, compared to those who had never divorced. Moreover, divorced respondents considered the contact with biological children to be less regular and important than respondents who had never divorced. Furthermore, respondents who were older had less contact with biological children and perceived the contact as less regular and important than younger respondents.

With respect to the relationship characteristics, we observed that among the biological children, there was most often contact between mothers and daughters, followed by fathers and daughters, and contacts with sons. Remarkably, these gender differences were not observed with respect to whether parents considered the contact as regular and important. When there was a larger age difference between a respondent and a biological child, there was less frequent contact and the contact was perceived as less regular and important. Finally, when the traveling distance to the biological child was greater, respondents had less frequent contact and the contact was perceived as less regular and important.

Contact between stepparents and stepchildren

Turning to the results on stepchildren, we found no significant difference in the contact with stepchildren within complex and simple stepfamilies. However, respondents perceived the contact with stepchildren within complex stepfamilies as more regular and important (probability = .74) than contact with stepchildren in simple stepfamilies (probability = .46). The contact with stepchildren was not affected by whether the children were minors when the stepfamily was formed or by the presence of shared biological children.

Considering the parent characteristics, we observed that cohabiting respondents perceived the contact to be less regular and important than married and single respondents. Whether the respondent had previously been divorced did not have a significant effect on the contact with stepchildren. Furthermore, the older respondents perceived the contact with stepchildren as less regular and important than younger respondents (OR = .94).

With respect to relationship characteristics, we only observed that mothers perceived the contact with stepsons as less regular and important. For age difference and traveling time, we observed results similar to those for biological children.

DISCUSSION

In this study, we examined the family structure of older parents and their (step)children, further extending previous research by focusing on the effect of family structure on the variation in contact between parents and their biological children and between stepparents and their stepchildren. Our findings offer insight into the different family structures of aging stepfamilies. We observe that there is a great diversity within the different family structures, including whether children entered the stepfamily as a minor or adult and the total number of children within these families. Moreover, the marital status and marital history of the parents adds to the complexity of the different family structures.

The multilevel analyses gave indications of how the family structure might effect the variation in contact between parents and (step)children. Consistent with earlier research, we observed that parents have less contact with their stepchildren than with their biological children. More important, however, our results show that it is not only the difference between biological and stepchildren that counts, but also what the structure of the (step)family is. We observed that parents have more contact with their biological children in *biological* families than in stepfamilies. Moreover, parents perceived the contact with biological children to be more regular and important in complex stepfamilies than simple stepfamilies. Keeping in mind that these simple stepfamilies included stepchildren of the other parent but not the stepchildren of the respondent, our results suggest that parents have less contact with both biological and stepchildren in stepfamilies. This may be traced back to the original marital disruption which has caused tensions and lack of emotional closeness in the family (White, 1994). Conversely, within the complex stepfamilies parents may try to preserve existing relationships with biological children above the investment in a new stepchild relationship, thus preventing the parent from being well connected to both biological and stepchildren. Moreover, it is possible that there may be a conflict between multiple roles (Fine, Coleman & Ganong, 1998), those of biological parent and stepparent.

With respect to stepchildren, stepparents perceived the contact as more regular and important in simple stepfamilies than in complex stepfamilies. Children more often entered the simple stepfamily as minors, and this might have enabled the stepparent and stepchild more time to build up a relationship. However, our study also shows that whether the stepfamily was formed when stepchildren were minors or adults had no effect on the contact with stepchildren. Another explanation may be that there are fewer competing ties within these simple stepfamilies, enabling stepparents to invest more in the stepchild and become more emotionally close. When steprelationships are emotionally close, then obligations to them are similar to perceived obligations to biological relationships (Ganong & Coleman, 1999). Within simple stepfamilies, parents who did not or were unable to maintain relationships with their biological children, as may happen with a divorce, may actually be less emotionally close within biological relationships than within steprelationships (Ganong &

Coleman, 2006).

All in all, the findings suggest that the objective with which the simple and complex stepfamilies originate might be different. Stepparents in simple stepfamilies might make more of an effort to be a 'reconstituted nuclear family' (Levin, 1997) where stepfamilies present themselves as if they were a first-marriage nuclear family. In comparison, (step)parents in complex stepfamilies do not attempt to reconstitute the family but rather focus on their own biological children. In this respect, this stepfamily form seems to revolve more around the partner relationship than the family as an institution. The steprelationship is created and sustained by a partner relationship; the primary impetus for contact may be via the biological parent. When the partner relationship ends, the steprelationship will most probably also end.

We now come to some methodological considerations. Although our initial sample was large, the number of families with stepchildren was small. This can partly be explained by the fact that the likelihood of having experienced divorce is still rather low among the Netherlands cohorts of older adults (Liefbroer & Dykstra, 2000). However, it might also be that the differences in contact between older parents and their biological and stepchildren were underestimated because parents did not identify the stepchild as such. In this respect, White (1998) has suggested that underreporting is most likely among people with complex family structures, as indeed the results of our study show. Underreporting may reflect the manner in which people define their families, in general, and child relationships, in specific. If a measure specifically asking whether there were children from prior unions of the partner had been used, the number of stepchildren might have been more accurate. Since we assessed the existence of stepchildren in both a varied and repeated manner, the problem of underestimation was overcome to some extent. Another limitation is that we did not have information on the marital history of the partner of the respondent. The marital history of both partners is needed to give a complete picture of the complexity of family structures. In this respect it is also relevant to assess whether or not adult children spent time in the same household with stepparents, to what extent step- and biological children spent time in the same household, and the duration of cohabitation.

Although we generally observed that many stepchildren had regular contact with their stepparents, an important question for future research is to what extent aging stepparents can actually depend on their stepchildren when they become more dependent and need care. Our study did not address this issue, partly due to the fact that the oldest individuals in the survey were overrepresented causing a larger number of older adults to be lost due to frailty. Future research may want to corroborate our findings for more dependent older parents. In this respect a recent study, based on vignettes, Ganong and Coleman (2006) found that the motivation to help older stepparents is largely conditional, with relationship quality and the older stepparents' needs as major considerations. Helping stepparents was mainly perceived as a way to fulfil filial obligations to the parent. Furthermore, based on the results of our study we would expect that stepparents who become more dependent and need care are more likely

to receive help from stepchildren within the simple stepfamily than within the complex family. Finally, given the fact that so little is known about aging steprelationships, it would also be of interest whether similar results would be found in countries where the increase in divorce and remarriage started earlier than in the Netherlands. Most probably the number of aging stepfamilies would be higher in these countries, and moreover, the norms concerning the contact within these stepfamilies might have become more institutionalized.

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**3 CHANGES IN CONTACT AND SUPPORT WITHIN INTERGENERATIONAL
RELATIONSHIPS IN THE NETHERLANDS: A COHORT AND TIME-
SEQUENTIAL PERSPECTIVE**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates whether the frequency of contact and support exchanged in relationships between parents and adult children declines over successive cohorts and over individual time in the Netherlands. Respondents included a birth cohort from 1928 – 1937 with data collected in 1992 ($N = 941$) and in 2002 ($N = 574$) and a birth cohort from 1938 – 1947 with data collected in 2002 ($N = 884$). We assessed cohort and time-sequential changes. Parents of the later cohort had more contact and support exchanges with their children than the earlier cohort, revealing that families have not declined in importance. Furthermore, longitudinally, contact and supportive exchanges with adult children decreased, suggesting that parents and children devote less time to intergenerational relationships during this ‘empty nest’ phase.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most profound and dramatic demographic changes that Western societies have witnessed during the 20th century has been the aging of the population, resulting in both longer years of linked lives between generations and longer lives as parents and adult children than ever before in human history. At the same time, birth rates have decreased in many Western countries, lowering the number of children available as potential supporters (De Jong Gierveld, 1998; Suitor, Pillemer, Keeten, & Robison, 1995). Moreover, the impact of industrialization and modernization seems to have eroded the families' traditional functions (Burgess, 1916), shifting responsibility from the family to a public solidarity system. The notion that in the past, parents were supported more by their offspring is based on the assumption that the disintegration of the family is an artifact of modernization (Aboderin, 2004; Hareven, 1995; Shanas, 1979). However, in the past century, research on intergenerational relationships beyond the nuclear household has indicated the continuation of family bonds (Troll, 1971). Parents and children have frequent contact and continue to engage in mutually supportive patterns of exchange (Mancini & Blieszner, 1989). Despite this evidence, the notion of a "breakdown" of family support persists in both popular and professional perceptions (Aboderin, 2004).

Studies on social change and relationships between parents and adult children are scarce and have so far been done primarily on very old parents. One of the few examples of recent research on social change and intergenerational relationships is a cross-national, multisample study conducted by Silverstein, Burholt, Wenger, and Bengtson (1998). They compared parent-child relationships among very old parents (M age = 86) in Wales with those of parents (M age = 85) in Los Angeles and, nationally, in the United States. The data for the Wales, Los Angeles and U.S. National sample were collected between 1990 and 1995. Wales is characterized as being more traditional and generally more rural than the U.S., and the expected differences between Welsh and American parents were interpreted as being attributable to modernization. Contrary to expectations, only a few differences were observed. There were more geographically close relationships among the Welsh parents and the contact frequency was higher, but there were no differences observed in the amount of support exchanged. Silverstein and colleagues explained this by assuming that the situations of both countries are similar and that the social and economical process of modernization in Wales could be compared to that of the United States. However, Aboderin (2004) casts doubt on the underlying assumption of uniform societal development, which predicts the same "breakdown" of family support within different countries and within different periods of time. She also questions whether the process is taking place in the same manner in different countries.

A European study by Vollenwyder, Bickel, d'Epainay, and Maystre (2002) compared changes in contact frequency between older people (65 – 79 years of age) and their families in two surveys carried out in Switzerland in 1979 and 1994. Their findings showed an increase in contact across cohorts, which can partly be explained by structural factors, such as a decline in family size, an increase in proximity of children and improvements in means of communication (cars and telephones). The authors suggest that specific family cultures based on religious beliefs and practices may also play a role in family relations.

These studies depart from the argument that macrostructural trends within Western societies have changed the structure and therefore reduced the functions of families. Although societal factors are considered, studies supporting this argument only offer broad propositions to explain a decline in contact and support between parents and adult children. These explanations are primarily drawn from major transformations such as industrialization, urbanization, the spread of the market economy and the growing influence of values of individualization. What is lacking, however, is an explicit account of the individual consequences of the macrostructural trends that have taken place. Much of the attention that the relationship between parent and adult child has received has been focused on the influence of demographic changes such as the decrease in birth rate, increase in divorce and decrease in intergenerational coresidence. Less attention has been given to the relationship itself. Social and demographic changes may indeed weaken these relationships, but claims of a decline in intergenerational solidarity between parents and children call for careful and rigorous analysis of the evidence for trends in contact and support. Based on the predominantly held assumption of family decline, we derive and test the following hypothesis: *Social and demographic changes reduce the opportunities for contact and support exchange between parents and adult children.* This hypothesis requires that a family decline is evident in our data which will also be the subject of our study.

In this study, we focus on societal trends and apply a broader life-course perspective than has been done in previous studies. We examine changes in relationships between parents (aged about 60 years) and their adult children (aged about 30 years) using individual-level data on contact and support in the Netherlands in the 1990s. This category of middle-aged parents has been addressed less in previous research and is characterized by parents still in good health who are entering a period of (pre)retirement and an “empty nest” transition when children leave home. For adult children, this is a period in the life course characterized by ending schooling, getting married, having children and becoming a member of the labor force (White & Rogers, 1997). In this period, adult children are more focused on labor participation and the demands of their new families (Rossi & Rossi, 1990).

The main question of this article addresses whether, and if so, to which extent the individual consequences of macrostructural trends are related to contact and support exchange between parents and adult children. Specifically, we focus on the three major trends: divorce, labor-force participation and geographical proximity in parent-child residential location. In addition, we apply a cohort and time-sequential analysis of contact frequency and the exchange of instrumental and emotional support within relationships between parents and their children. Specifically, we compare two birth cohorts: The relationship characteristics of parents interviewed in 1992 were compared with those of parents of the same age at the time of the interview conducted in 2002 (reflecting *cohort* and *period effects*). Has contact and support increased or decreased in the population across time, displaying “period effects”? Do later generations (“cohorts”) receive more or less contact and exchange more or less support than earlier ones?

Trends, such as improved employment opportunities for women, that were in progress when the earlier cohort reached retirement age in the 1990s, were more firmly established a decade later at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Therefore, we assume that social circumstances have different effects on the two cohorts. Social developments not only affect the young but also those in later life, which is addressed by the longitudinal design of this study, in which changes were assessed over the 10 years the continued parent-child relationships were studied (*age* and *period effects*). Is more or less contact and support exchanged as people age? Trends in, for example, female labor-force participation might be related to developments in contact and support exchange. The pressure of combining employment and care giving responsibilities might lead to less contact and support between older parents and adult children.

By presenting more evidence on age, period and cohort effects, we hope to get a better understanding of changes in intergenerational relationships and provide more definite indications about what such changes might mean for our society. Drawing on prior research, we further develop the rationale for focusing on divorce, labor-force participation and geographical proximity in parent-child residential location.

Consequences of opportunities

As in many other Western societies, there has been a strong increase in divorce in the Netherlands over the past decades. From the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, the rate of divorce increased and still remains at a high level, with almost one in four contemporary marriages in the Netherlands eventually ending in divorce (De Jong, 1999). By international comparisons, the divorce rate in the Netherlands is at an intermediate level. Marriage cohort tables show that divorce increased from 2% after five years of marriage for couples married in 1960 to about 13% for couples married in the early 1990s (Kalmijn, De Graaf, & Poortman, 2004). Popenoe (1993) contends that this increase has major consequences, changing the structure and further reducing the functions of families, and divorce has been found to have an adverse

effect on parent-child relationships (Aquilino, 1994; Eggebeen, 1992). Specifically, these studies suggest that divorce results in less contact and instrumental and emotional support between the divorced parent and the child.

Another important change that has occurred is the increased labor-force participation of women, who are more often involved in maintaining intergenerational relationships than males (Spitze & Logan, 1990). In regard to the 1990s in the Netherlands, the increased labor-force participation of women is of special interest because it occurred relatively late. Female labor-force participation only started to increase in the 1970s, when 29% of the women between 15 and 64 years of age were employed (Social and Cultural Planning Office, 2000). Labor participation was stable at 30% up to 1985 and increased after that to 39% in 1990 and 53% in 2001 (Portegijs, Boelens, & Keuzenkamp, 2002). The largest increase is observed within younger cohorts of women (25 – 54 years of age), compared to older cohorts (55 – 64 years of age). The current female employment rate in the Netherlands is now higher than the European Union average; however, most female employment is part-time, and currently the Netherlands has the highest proportion of women working part-time, compared to other Western countries (Portegijs et al., 2002). While past research is not clear on the effect that employment has on intergenerational support patterns, it has been found to have a negative effect on the quality of the relationship between adult daughters and their parents (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998).

Furthermore, geographical proximity in parent-child residential location is strongly associated with frequency of contact and exchange of support (Lawton, Silverstein & Bengtson, 1994). Coresidence of parents with their adult children is associated with higher levels of interaction and more support exchange than living nearby (White & Rogers, 1997). Liefbroer and De Jong Gierveld (1995) calculated for the Netherlands that in 1965, 55% of men and 44% of women at age 60 were coresiding with one or more of their children; in 1990 these percentages were 33% and 22%, respectively. As data from the current study shows, in 2002 a further decline in intergenerational coresidence was observed: 23% and 16%, respectively. Furthermore, when parents and children do not coreside, geographic proximity concerns differences between children living nearby, for example in the same neighborhood, or children living at a large traveling distance. Although there are no data on historical trends in the Netherlands available in the period under study, the current study shows an increase in children's geographical proximity concurrent with a decline in coresidence.

Control variables

Finally, there are a number of other parent and child characteristics that may have consequences for the contact and support between parents and children. The age of parents and children could be related to contact and support exchange (Morgan, Schuster & Butler, 1991). The older one is, the more support one receives and the less support one gives to

others, irrespective of changes in health (Van Tilburg & Broese van Groenou, 2002). Other characteristics we took into account were the number of children. It is plausible that parents with more children have less contact and support exchange with each of them. Also, educational level and functional capacity were taken into account. Older adults with a higher education have less contact (Greenwell & Bengtson, 1997), receive less instrumental support and give more support than those with a lower education (Broese van Groenou & Van Tilburg, 2003). Functional limitations provide fewer opportunities to give (instrumental) support and are an indicator of more need for (instrumental) support (Van Tilburg & Broese van Groenou, 2002).

In addition to respondent characteristics, we examined the influence on contact and support exchange of a child's partner status and having children of their own. Previous studies show that children who are divorced or single have poorer relationships with their parents than married children (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998). Past research is not clear what effect having a grandchild has on the contact and support exchange between parents and children, but we expect that the presence of grandchildren might reduce contact frequency and support exchange. We also included the influence of gender on contact and support exchange: In general, females are more involved than males in maintaining intergenerational relationships (Spitze & Logan, 1990). Also, same-sex dyads differ from cross-sex dyads. Children often identify more strongly with the parent of the same sex (Aquilino, 1994; Lee, Dwyer, & Coward, 1993); specifically, the mother-daughter relationship is found to be closer than other dyad types.

METHODS

Respondents

Data were obtained from two surveys of the aging population in the Netherlands. The first survey was carried out in 1992. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 4494 respondents in the research program "Living Arrangements and Social Networks of Older Adults" (Knipscheer, De Jong Gierveld, Van Tilburg, & Dykstra, 1995). The program used a stratified random sample of men and women born between 1903 and 1937. The sample was taken from the population registers of 11 urban and rural municipalities, regions that represent differences in religion and urbanization in the Netherlands. The oldest individuals in these areas, particularly the oldest men, were over-represented in the sample. Respondents were interviewed in their homes, and personal computer assistance (CAPI) was used in the data collection. Of the 6107 eligible individuals in the sample, 2302 were unwilling to participate due to a lack of interest or time; another 734 were ineligible because they had died or were too ill or cognitively impaired to be interviewed. The cooperation rate was 62%, which is relatively high compared to many surveys in the Netherlands where participation rates are low

(Bethlehem & Kersten, 1982). For the second survey, conducted in 2002, the Longitudinal Aging Study Amsterdam (LASA) (Deeg, Knipscheer, & Van Tilburg, 1993) sampled a new cohort (birth years 1938 – 1947, $N = 1002$) from the same sampling frame as the earlier cohort, with a cooperation rate of 57%. For the study reported here, from the 1992 data collection, the birth cohort 1928–1937 was used ($N = 1137$), resulting in data from two consecutive birth cohorts within the same age range (55 – 65 years) with an interval of 10 years. We will refer to these cohorts as the *early* (born in 1928 – 1937) and the *late* cohort (1938 – 1947).

The following respondents were not included: those who had no children ($n = 150$ for the early cohort and $n = 105$ for the late cohort), those who had children that were all younger than 18 years ($n = 12$ and $n = 4$, respectively), and those whose interviews had to be shortened or broken off because of frailty ($n = 34$ and $n = 9$, respectively). This resulted in 941 respondents in the early cohort with a total of 2816 children ($M = 3.0$, $SD = 1.5$) and 884 respondents in the late cohort with 2211 children ($M = 2.5$; $SD = 1.2$) for whom data were available.

For the early cohort, follow-ups were conducted in the context of LASA in 1992 – 1993, 1995 – 1996, 1998 – 1999 and 2001 – 2002. Data on all the children were collected only at the 2001 – 2002 observation, which is used as T2 in the current study. The T2 interviews were conducted between 9.4 and 10.6 years after T1 (9.9 years later, on average), resulting in data for 574 respondents with 1673 children ($M = 2.9$, $SD = 1.4$). Reasons for attrition (in total 39%) between T1 and T2 were the death of the respondent (12% of the original sample of 941), refusal (14%), severe physical or mental health problems (2%) or the respondent having moved to an unknown destination or abroad (2%). Missing data caused further exclusion: 6% of the respondents had a short interview by phone or by proxy and 3% of the interviews had to be shortened or broken off because of frailty. Furthermore, 12 children had died and two parents had lost their only child by death. The attrition caused by refusal resulted in a sample with a lower contact frequency ($M = 167$ days per year for the 1673 relationships included in the longitudinal study, compared to $M = 187$ for the 403 relationships of respondents who refused further cooperation, $p < .01$), emotional support given more often by the parent (76% versus 67%, $p < .01$), instrumental support given more often (55% versus 47%, $p < .01$) and instrumental support received more often by the parent (43% versus 34%, $p < .01$). No significant differences were observed for emotional support received (81% and 78%, respectively) and whether the child was identified as a member of the personal network (90% and 88%, respectively). This selection does not clearly indicate that respondents with poor intergenerational relationships ended their cooperation with the study.

Measurements

A question was posed about contact frequency in all the parent-child relationships: "How often are you in touch with X?" Contact frequency was classified into eight categories from less than once a year to daily, and was converted to number of days per year. It was assumed that there was daily contact between a child and a parent sharing the household. As Table 3.1 shows, intergenerational contact is frequent, on average. Questions on supportive exchanges were posed to a selection of the relationships (i.e., those with children included in the personal network). To obtain adequate information on their networks, the older parents were asked to identify their personal network members by name. The main objective of this was to identify a network that reflected the socially active relationships of the older adult in the core as well as the outer layers of the larger network (Van Tilburg, 1995). This procedure was adopted from Cochran et al. (1990). The following question was posed: "Name the people you have frequent contact with and who are important to you." Only people above the age of 18 could be named. For a subset of the identified network members (i.e., the 10 with the highest frequency of contact) questions were asked about support. The average network size was about 14, and the number of identified network members ranged from zero to over 70. Restrictions in the data collection forced us to ask questions about support for a limited number of network members. The question about receiving instrumental support was: "How often in the past year did X help you with daily chores in and around the house, such as preparing meals, cleaning the house, transportation, small repairs, or filling out forms?" The question about receiving emotional support was: "How often in the past year have you told X about your personal experiences and feelings?" With respect to support given, the questions were reversed. The data structure required multilevel analyses (see below) and the logistic approach fitted best with the ordinal measurement level of the support exchanges. The answer categories "never" and "seldom" were contrasted to the categories "sometimes" and "often." On average, emotional support is exchanged more often than instrumental support, and parents report that they provided instrumental support more often than they received this type of support.

In a secondary study, we investigated whether there were any differences between the reports of both parents and those of some of their children as respondents ($n = 218$ relationship pairs). Correlations between the parents' and child's reports on supportive exchanges were between .34 and .40, indicating the subjective nature of the measurements. Reports on frequency of contact were more highly correlated ($r = .71$) and the traveling time reported by the parents was strongly correlated ($r > .79$) with the time reported by the child, as well as the distance in a straight line and traveling distance and time by car, as obtained from public databases.

Table 3.1

Means and Percentages of Variables Used in the Analyses for the Early and Late Cohort and Longitudinally for T1 and T2

Cohort Observation	Early (1928-1937) T1 (1992)	Late (1938-1947) T1 (2002)	Early (1928-1937) T1 (1992) T2 (2002)	
<i>Respondent characteristics</i>	<i>N = 941</i>	<i>N = 884</i>	<i>N = 574^a</i>	<i>N = 574</i>
Age	59.4	60.0 ***	59.2	69.0 ^b
Number of children	3.04	2.52 ***	2.94	2.91 ^{bc}
Number of children aged 0-17 years	.05	.05	.03	.00
Number of children in household	.45	.26 ***	.45	.06 ***
Marital history and status		***		***
Never married, currently no partner	0%	0%	0%	0%
First marriage	80%	73%	82%	71%
Ever divorced, currently married or partnered	5%	10%	5%	5%
Ever divorced, currently no partner	3%	8%	3%	3%
Ever widowed, currently married or partnered	5%	4%	3%	4%
Ever widowed, currently no partner	8%	5%	7%	17%
Educational level (years)	9.3	10.2 ***	9.6	^d
Employment		***		***
Not employed	69%	60%	65%	91%
Employed part-time	11%	17%	12%	7%
Employed full-time	21%	23%	24%	2%
Functional capacity (6-30)	29.2	28.6 ***	29.5	28.3 ***
<i>Child characteristics</i>	<i>N = 2816</i>	<i>N = 2211</i>	<i>N = 1673^a</i>	<i>N = 1673</i>
Age	30.0	31.4 ***	29.7	39.7 ^b
Partner (no - yes)	70%	75% ***	69%	84% ***
Children (no - yes)	41%	45% **	41%	72% ***
Employment		***		***
Not employed	28%	16%	28%	14%
Employed part-time	11%	19%	11%	23%
Employed full-time	61%	65%	61%	64%

<i>Relationship characteristics</i>	<i>N</i> = 2816	<i>N</i> = 2211	<i>N</i> = 1673 ^a	<i>N</i> = 1673 ^b
Gender				
Father and son	24%	23%	25%	25%
Father and daughter	22%	24%	23%	23%
Mother and son	27%	29%	22%	22%
Mother and daughter	26%	25%	26%	26%
Geographic proximity		***		***
Co-residing	15%	10%	16%	2%
No co-residence; within 15 minutes traveling time	41%	45%	41%	44%
More than 15 minutes traveling time	44%	44%	44%	54%
Contact frequency (days per year)	167.4	166.0 ^e	165.6	122.1 ^e
Emotional support received (no, yes)	78%	83% ^e	73%	67% ^e
Emotional support given (no, yes)	74%	86% ^e	71%	73% ^e
Instrumental support received (no, yes)	41%	48% ^e	41%	38% ^e
Instrumental support given (no, yes)	53%	65% ^e	53%	46% ^e

Note: (Paired) *t*-tests were applied for interval variables; χ^2 -tests for nominal variables. ^aA subsample of the sample described in the first column. ^bDifference not tested. ^cFor T1 including 12 children who died between T1 and T2. ^dNo T2 observation. ^eDifference examined in the multilevel models.

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

Only adult children were included in the analysis because non-adult children predominantly live with the parent and, consequently, have daily contact, so no data are available on support exchange for children under 18 years because these children were not included in the network. As a result, 44 children were excluded from the early cohort at T1, leaving 2772 relationships; 18 were excluded at T2, leaving a total of 1655 children for the longitudinal analyses and 41 from the late cohort.

Data on support were not available for all relationships. A number of children were not identified within the network. Of the 2772 adult children of the early cohort, 90% were identified as network members at T1, and 94% of the 1673 at T2 were so identified (the difference was significant at $p < .01$). For the late cohort, who had 2211 adult children, 94% were identified as network members (the difference with the early cohort was significant at $p < .001$). It is interesting to note that not all the children identified in the network were among the 10 with the highest contact frequency. Data on support were available for 2239 relationships at T1, for 1302 relationships at T2, and for 1804 relationships within the late cohort. Reasons for loss of children were that other network members were identified among the parents' 10 network members with the highest frequency of contact and, in a number of cases, respondents had more than 10 children. The reasons for not having support data differed longitudinally ($p < .001$): For the early cohort at T1, 10% of the children were not included in the network and 8% were not among the 10 with the highest frequency of contact; for T2, this was 7% and 16%, respectively. Therefore the analyses were restricted to relationships for which data on support exchange were available for both T1 and T2. The reasons for not having support data also differed between the cohorts ($p < .001$): For the early cohort, 11% of the children were not included in the network and 7% were not among the 10 with the highest frequency of contact; for the late cohort, these numbers were 6% and 10%, respectively. However, the proportion of children for whom data on support exchange was available did not differ (82% and 84%, respectively, $p > .05$).

The following characteristics were included for each respondent: age, number of children and number of children in the household, marital history and status, employment status, education and functional capacity. Marital status is time-specific and covers previous changes in marital status (divorce or widowhood) that might affect contact and support exchange with children. We distinguished between never married and not having a partner, being in the first marriage (including a small number of respondents who never married and lived with their partner), ever divorced or widowed and remarried or repartnered, and ever divorced or widowed and not having a partner relationship. We present the distribution in Table 3.1. Between the early and late cohort, a significant increase was observed in those who were ever divorced. Because of death, over time we observed a strong increase in widowed parents without a partner.

Educational level was measured in years. The late cohort had more years of education than the early cohort. Since it was expected that only a few respondents attended school after

T1, the educational level at T2 was not observed. The respondent's employment status was assessed with a single question: "Are you currently employed?" The working respondents were asked the number of hours a week they worked according to their employment contract. In the absence of a contract (e.g., because the respondent was self-employed), an approximation of the actual number of hours was asked (*full-time* was defined as 28 hours or more per week). An increase in both full-time and part-time employment was observed between the early and late cohorts. As would be expected, longitudinally we observed an increase in the number of respondents who were not employed.

Functional capacity was measured with six questions about having difficulty performing the activities of daily living, such as, "Can you walk up and down stairs?" The five possible answers were "not at all," "only with help," "with a great deal of difficulty," "with some difficulty" and "without difficulty," ranging from 6 (*poor*) to 30 (*good capacity*). The psychometric properties were satisfactory (Loevinger's coefficient of homogeneity $H \geq .46$, reliability $\rho \geq .79$). The early cohort had a slightly greater functional capacity than the late cohort. This could be because selection effects played a role (i.e., either selective dropout in our sample or in the population, which could be caused by some people, who might otherwise have died, surviving into the late cohort). Longitudinally, there was a decrease in functional capacity, most likely because the respondents were 10 years older.

Information about the children's gender, age, whether they had children of their own, and partner and employment status was collected from the parent. Between the early and late cohorts, there was a small increase in the number of adult children with children of their own. An increase was also observed between the early and late cohorts and longitudinally in the number of children with a partner. This might be related to the somewhat higher age of children in the late cohort. Employment of a child was assessed with a single question: "Does X have a job, and if so does s/he work full-time or part-time?" We found an increase in employment across both cohorts and longitudinally, with children working part-time more often.

To measure relationship characteristics, the gender of the parent and child were combined to distinguish between same-sex and cross-sex relationships. The distribution on the relationship level presented in Table 3.1 does not show the gender distribution of the parents. Of the parents, 53% among both the early and late cohorts were female. Longitudinally, 51% were female. Information was also collected on whether adult children shared a household with parents, and when they did not live with their parents, information was asked about the traveling time to a child. The geographic proximity was analyzed as a nominal variable with three categories: a child shared the household with a parent; lived nearby, arbitrarily chosen as a traveling time of 15 minutes or less; or lived farther away, a traveling time of more than 15 minutes. Within the late cohort, a smaller number of children were sharing the household with a parent. More children lived nearby.

The distribution at the parental level was as follows: Within the early cohort, 30% of the parents coresided with one or more children, 47% did not share the household with a child and had at least one child living nearby, and 23% had no children living nearby. Within the late cohort, these percentages were 19%, 55% and 26%, respectively. Longitudinally, almost all children had left the household. At T1, 244 children shared the household with a parent; 10 years later, most of them ($n = 216$) had left the parental home. There were a few children living independently at T1 who were coresiding with parents again at T2 ($n = 7$). In particular there was an increase in the percentage of children not living nearby. In contrast to the data on the relationship level, the data on the parental level shows an increase in having a child living nearby. Among the parents at T2, 5% coresided with one or more children (at T1 this was 31%), 64% did not share the household with a child and had at least one child living nearby (47% at T1), and 31% had no children living nearby (23% at T1).

Procedure

To assess differences in contact frequency and support exchange, we applied a hierarchical multilevel regression analysis (MLn) (Rasbash & Woodhouse, 1995). We assume that relationships of the same respondent will be more alike than relationships of different respondents. Applying ordinary regression analysis to this kind of data set would violate the assumption of independence of error terms. One consequence would be that we would overestimate the number of degrees of freedom and, consequently, the significance of effects, leading to a number of spurious significancies. However, the number of degrees of freedom is not the only subject of concern. Using ordinary regression analysis, the effects of respondents with many relationships would dominate the effects since they have a relatively large number of representations on a lower level. In multilevel analysis, variables from different levels (e.g., parents and children) are analyzed simultaneously; the statistical model includes the various dependencies. Analyses were performed with the scores of contact frequency as the dependent variable in a linear model. The unstandardized regression coefficients are presented. Emotional support received, emotional support given, instrumental support received and instrumental support given were dependent variables in logistic models. Two coefficients are presented for each explanatory variable: the logistic regression coefficient (the effect on the log-odds) and the effect on the odds. The last coefficient indicates the factor by which a change in an independent variable changes the odds of support exchanged.

To assess sequential changes in cohorts, the early and late birth cohorts were compared, with children and the relationships with their parents nested within the parents. In Model 1, in order to assess the general association of the two cohorts with contact frequency and support exchange, the equation included a dichotomous variable indicating membership in the early or late cohort. To assess whether parent, child and/or relationship characteristics influenced the frequency of contact and support exchange, the equation was further extended in Model 2 with the specific variables described above.

To assess time-sequential changes, the early cohort was compared over a 10-year period. Observations of contact frequency and support exchange at T1 and T2 are nested in the relationships, and the children and their relationships with parents are nested in the parents. The analyses were restricted to relationships for which data on contact frequency and support exchange were available for both T1 and T2. The two models were equal to the models for the cohort comparison, with the dummy for the cohort differences in the models replaced by the effect of time (i.e., the interval between T1 and T2).

Period and cohort effects are confounded in the cohort-sequential analysis; period and aging effects are confounded in the time-sequential analysis. It is assumed that the combination of both types of analysis contributes to the disentanglement of period, cohort and aging effects.

RESULTS

This study investigated whether there was a decline in frequency of contact and support exchanged between older parents and adult children in the Netherlands in the 1990s. First, a comparison was made between two birth cohorts and longitudinally over 10 years, assuming changes in both contact frequency and support exchanged. The results show that there was a decrease in frequency of contact between the early and late cohorts, from 172 days of contact to 169 days ($B = -2.9$; Table 3.2, Model 1); however, this difference is not significant. In contrast, parents in the late cohort exchanged significantly more support with their children than parents in the early cohort. We found that parents within the late cohort reported giving more support than they received. Specifically, the frequency of giving emotional support was higher than the frequency of giving instrumental support. What differences occur when we control for respondent, child and relationship characteristics in Model 2? With respect to contact frequency, we observed a difference of 11 days of contact per year in favor of the late cohort (Table 3.2, Model 2), whereas the estimates in Models 1 were not significant. The estimates of cohort effects in support exchanges were not strongly affected by the inclusion of parent, child, and relationship characteristics, except that receiving emotional support was no longer significant.

Table 3.2

Variable	Contact Frequency (days per year)			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	SE	B	SE
Intercept	172.0***	3.4	312.8***	49.9
Cohort (0 = 1928-1937, 1 = 1938-1947)	-2.9	5.0	10.9**	4.2
Parent's age			-.9	.8
Parent's number of children			-11.0***	1.4
Parent's number of children aged 0-17 years			.8	7.3
Parent's marital history and status (first marriage omitted)				
Ever divorced, currently married or partnered			-51.8***	7.7
Ever divorced, currently no partner			-20.7*	8.5
Ever widowed, currently married or partnered			-35.5**	11.2
Ever widowed, currently no partner			19.9*	8.0
Parent's educational level (years)			-2.8***	.7
Parent's employment (not employed omitted)				
Employed part-time			-3.6	6.0
Employed full-time			2.3	5.7
Parent's functional capacity (6-30)			-.7	.7
Child's age			-2.1***	.4
Child having partner (no - yes)			-19.1***	3.7
Child having children (no - yes)			20.3***	3.6

Child's employment (not employed omitted)			
Employed part-time	5.2	4.7	
Employed full-time	-7.3	3.8	
Gender			
Father and daughter	6.9	4.1	
Mother and son	-6.3	5.2	
Mother and daughter	27.9***	5.4	
Geographic proximity (>15 minutes omitted)			
Co-residing	236.3***	5.4	
No co-residence; within 15 minutes traveling time	64.2***	3.1	
Estimated parameters	1	22	
Deviance	61742.6	59177.6	

Variable	Emotional Support (no, yes)									
	Received					Given				
	Model 1		Model 2			Model 1		Model 2		
	B	SE	e ^B	B	SE	e ^B	B	SE	e ^B	B
Intercept	1.29***	.07	3.61	-2.32	1.45	.10	1.04***	.07	2.82	-1.79
Cohort (0 = 1928-1937, 1 = 1938-1947)	.31**	.11	1.37	.23	.12	1.26	.82***	.11	2.27	.86***
Parent's age				.03	.02	1.03				.02
Parent's number of children				-.12**	.04	.89				-.05
Parent's number of children aged 0-17				-.02	.20	.98				.17
Parent's marital history and status (first marriage omitted)										.21
Ever divorced, currently married or partnered				-.15	.24	.86				-.16
Ever divorced, currently no partner				-.34	.25	.71				-.71**
Ever widowed, currently married or partnered				-.08	.34	.92				-.34
Ever widowed, currently no partner				-.50*	.22	.60				-.16
Parent's educational level (years)				.09***	.02	1.10				.09***
Parent's employment (not employed omitted)										.02
Employed part-time				.19	.18	1.21				.15
Employed full-time				.13	.16	1.14				-.11
Parent's functional capacity (6-30)				.04*	.02	1.05				.05*
Child's age				-.02	.01	.98				-.03*
Child having partner (no - yes)				.01	.13	1.01				-.10
Child having children (no - yes)				.12	.12	1.12				-.03

Child's employment (not employed omitted)									
Employed part-time	.27	.17	1.31		.37*	.17	1.45		
Employed full-time	.18	.13	1.19		.17		1.18		
Gender									
Father and daughter	.34*	.14	1.41		.21	.14	1.23		
Mother and son	.58***	.15	1.79		.31*	.15	1.36		
Mother and daughter	1.45***	.18	4.25		1.10***	.17	3.00		
Geographic proximity (>15 minutes omitted)									
Co-residing	.49**	.18	1.62		.02	.18	1.02		
No co-residence; within 15 minutes traveling time	.08	.11	1.08		-.11	.11	.89		
Estimated parameters	1								
Deviance	3410.0	22			22				
		2910.7			2890.9				
			3372.1	1					

Variable	Instrumental Support (no, yes)									
	Received					Given				
	Model 1		Model 2			Model 1		Model 2		
	B	SE	e ^B	B	SE	e ^B	B	SE	e ^B	B
Intercept	-.35 ***	.06	.70	5.25 ***	1.18	189.81	.13 *	.06	1.14	-.19
Cohort (0 = 1928-1937, 1 = 1938-1947)	.30 ***	.09	1.35	.40 ***	.10	1.49	.54 ***	.09	1.72	.73 ***
Parent's age				-.04 *	.02	.96				-.02
Parent's number of children				-.05	.03	.95				-.16 ***
Parent's number of children aged 0-17 years				-.45 *	.21	.64				-.30
Parent's marital history and status (first marriage omitted)										
Ever divorced, currently married or partnered				-.27	.20	.77				-.35
Ever divorced, currently no partner				.03	.20	1.03				-.35
Ever widowed, currently married or partnered				-.24	.27	.79				.28
Ever widowed, currently no partner				.85 ***	.18	2.34				-.24
Parent's educational level (years)				.01	.02	1.01				.01
Parent's employment (not employed omitted)										
Employed part-time				.07	.14	1.07				-.32 *
Employed full-time				-.11	.13	.89				-.32 *
Parent's functional capacity (6-30)				-.10 ***	.02	.91				.09 ***
Child's age				-.02	.01	.98				-.03 **
Child having partner (no - yes)				-.10	.10	.91				-.30 **
Child having children (no - yes)				-.06	.10	.95				.15

Child's employment (not employed omitted)					
Employed part-time	.21	.13	1.23	.29*	.13 1.33
Employed full-time	.16	.11	1.18	-.07	.11 .93
Gender					
Father and daughter	-.09	.12	.91	.10	.12 1.11
Mother and son	-.30*	.13	.74	-.22	.13 .80
Mother and daughter	-.11	.13	.89	.12	.14 1.13
Geographic proximity (>15 minutes omitted)					
Co-residing	1.50***	.15	4.47	1.25***	.16 3.49
No co-residence; within 15 minutes traveling time	.47***	.09	1.60	.40***	.09 1.49
Estimated parameters					
Deviance	5272.7	22	5165.1	22	4760.0

Note: e^B = exponentiated B.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

In comparison to the early cohort, the characteristics of respondents, children and relationships have the following effects on contact frequency (Table 3.2, Model 2) for the late cohort: In general, parents who have fewer children have on average more contact with their adult children; in other words, to a certain extent contact is spread among the children. Parents who were ever divorced, regardless of whether they are remarried or repartnered, and widowed parents who are remarried or repartnered have less contact with their adult children. Those who are widowed with no new partner have more contact with their children. Parents with a higher educational level have less contact with their children. The employment status of the parents has no significant effect. Furthermore, parents with younger or single children or children who have children of their own have more contact with their children. The employment status of the children has no significant effect. Mothers and daughters and parents with children who are coresiding or living within 15 minutes traveling time of parents have more contact.

There were some differences observed between exchanges of support and frequency of contact. Parents who have fewer children receive on average more emotional support but give more instrumental support. Ever-divorced parents without a partner report giving less emotional support and widowed parents with no new partner receive more instrumental support but less emotional support. Educational level was only significant for emotional support. Although, employment status of parents has no significant effect on emotional support, parents who are employed give less instrumental support to their children. Parents with a higher functional capacity exchange more emotional support, give more instrumental support, and receive less instrumental support. Parents with younger children give less emotional and instrumental support. The partner status of the child has no significant effect on the exchange of emotional support; however, parents give more instrumental support to a child with no partner. Although having grandchildren plays a role in contact frequency, it does not affect the exchange of emotional or instrumental support. Respondents give more emotional and instrumental support when children are employed part-time. Both mothers and fathers exchange emotional support more often with their children; however, mothers receive less instrumental support from sons. Finally, parents exchange more instrumental support when children are coresiding or living within 15 minutes' traveling time. More emotional support is received from children coresiding with parents.

Longitudinally, we observed a decline in contact frequency of 44 days per year (Table 3.3, Model 1), indicating that as parent's age, they have less contact with their adult children. For instrumental support given and received and emotional support received, there were also negative effects longitudinally, indicating that between 1992 and 2002, there was a decrease in support exchanged. However, we did find an increase in the emotional support given to children as parents aged. With the introduction of respondent, child and relationship characteristics, there is still a decline in contact frequency of 20 days per year (Table 3.3, Model 2). In general, the estimates of longitudinal effects in support exchanges were either not affected or not strongly affected by the inclusion of parent, child and relationship characteristics, except that instrumental support given was no longer significant.

Overall, the characteristics of respondents, children and relationships had the same effects longitudinally on contact frequency (Table 3.3, Model 2) as was found between the two successive cohorts. We no longer found an effect of ever-divorced parents with no partner on contact frequency. Also, the longitudinal analysis showed more contact between fathers and daughters.

There were some differences observed between exchanges of support and frequency of contact, which are divergent to those found between the two successive cohorts and which we mention briefly here. Older parents exchange more emotional support than younger parents. Although the number of children has an effect on contact frequency, no effect was found for support exchange. Ever-divorced parents with a new partner receive less emotional support from children and give less instrumental support. Widowed parents with no partner receive more, but give less, instrumental support, and those who are widowed with a new partner exchange less emotional support. Parents who work full-time give less emotional support to their children. Functional capacity had no effect on emotional support received. Parents with children receive less emotional support. Having grandchildren increases the instrumental support given to children. Children's employment has no effect on the support given by parents, nor was any effect found on support exchange between fathers and daughters. Mothers receive more emotional support from children and give less instrumental support to sons; however, no effect was found on emotional support given and instrumental support received. Also, no effect was found for parents coresiding with a child and emotional support received.

It can be concluded that within the late cohort, when the characteristics of parents, children and relationships are taken into account, there is more frequent contact between parents and their children. Supportive exchanges within the late cohort are equal to or more intense than those in the early cohort, particularly the support given by parents. Furthermore, the results of the longitudinal analysis show that over time, parents have less frequency of contact and receive less support from their children.

Table 3.3

Linear and Logistic Multilevel Model Results Predicting Intergenerational Contact and Support Exchange over Ten Years Using Full Maximum Likelihood Estimation ($N \leq 3310$ Observations of 1655 Relationships from 574 Parents)

Variable	Contact Frequency (days per year)			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	SE	B	SE
Intercept	169.9 ***	3.9	272.3 ***	65.0
Interval (years divided by 10)	-44.2 ***	3.2	-20.2 ***	3.7
Parent's age			-.7	1.0
Parent's number of children			-11.6 ***	1.8
Parent's number of children aged 0-17 years			-7.9	14.3
Parent's marital history and status (first marriage omitted)				
Ever divorced, currently married or partnered			-43.4 ***	11.9
Ever divorced, currently no partner			-17.4	13.9
Ever widowed, currently married or partnered			-26.1 *	12.7
Ever widowed, currently no partner			34.8 ***	6.5
Parent's educational level (years)			-2.0 *	.9
Parent's employment (not employed omitted)				
Employed part-time			-1.6	6.6
Employed full-time			2.1	5.9
Parent's functional capacity (6-30)			.3	.8
Child's age			-2.5 ***	.5
Child having partner (no - yes)			-17.5 ***	4.7

Child having children (no - yes)			
Child's employment (not employed omitted)	12.7 **	4.4	
Employed part-time	5.6	5.4	
Employed full-time	-4.8	4.6	
Gender			
Father and daughter	14.0 *	5.5	
Mother and son	-7.8	6.8	
Mother and daughter	25.1 ***	7.1	
Geographic proximity (>15 minutes omitted)			
Co-residing	239.9 ***	7.1	
No co-residence; within 15 minutes traveling time	59.6 ***	3.7	
Estimated parameters	1	22	
Deviance	40759.4	39294.6	

Variable	Emotional Support (no, yes)									
	Received					Given				
	Model 1		Model 2			Model 1		Model 2		
	B	SE	e ^B	B	SE	e ^B	B	SE	e ^B	B
Intercept	1.56***	.08	4.75	-3.16*	1.56	.04	1.28***	.08	3.60	-3.39*
Interval (years divided by 10)	-.33**	.11	.72	-.31*	.14	.73	.33**	.11	1.39	.32*
Parent's age				.06**	.02	1.07				.06*
Parent's number of children				-.07	.04	.93				-.05
Parent's number of children aged 0-17 years				-.04	.44	.96				-.71
Parent's marital history and status (first marriage omitted)										
Ever divorced, currently married or partnered				-.65*	.32	.52				-.61
Ever divorced, currently no partner				-.28	.40	.76				-.55
Ever widowed, currently married or partnered				-.80*	.35	.45				-1.15***
Ever widowed, currently no partner				.26	.20	1.29				.09
Parent's educational level (years)				.07***	.02	1.07				.07**
Parent's employment (not employed omitted)										
Employed part-time				.08	.21	1.08				.01
Employed full-time				.22	.20	1.24				-.41*
Parent's functional capacity (6-30)				.03	.02	1.03				.05*
Child's age				-.04*	.02	.96				-.04**
Child having partner (no - yes)				.31	.17	1.36				-.04
Child having children (no - yes)				.12	.16	1.13				.05

Variable	Instrumental Support (no, yes)									
	Received					Given				
	Model 1		Model 2			Model 1		Model 2		
	B	SE	e ^B	B	SE	e ^B	B	SE	e ^B	B
Intercept	-.21 ***	.06	.81	1.38	1.27	3.98	.31 ***	.06	1.36	.96
Interval (years divided by 10)	-.14	.09	.87	-.07	.11	.93	-.24 **	.09	.79	-.10
Parent's age				.00	.02	1.00				-.04
Parent's number of children				-.02	.03	.98				-.05
Parent's number of children aged 0-17 years				-1.09 *	.48	.34				-.35
Parent's marital history and status (first marriage omitted)										
Ever divorced, currently married or partnered				-.15	.30	.86				-1.13 ***
Ever divorced, currently no partner				.09	.33	1.09				-.29
Ever widowed, currently married or partnered				-.34	.34	.71				-.33
Ever widowed, currently no partner				.72 ***	.15	2.06				-.47 **
Parent's educational level (years)				-.01	.02	.99				.00
Parent's employment (not employed omitted)										
Employed part-time				.00	.16	1.00				-.26
Employed full-time				-.31	.16	.73				-.49 **
Parent's functional capacity (6-30)				-.05 *	.02	.95				.11 ***
Child's age				-.01	.01	.99				-.05 ***
Child having partner (no - yes)				.10	.14	1.10				-.34 *
Child having children (no - yes)				-.23	.13	.80				.26 *

Child's employment (not employed omitted)					
Employed part-time	.01	.16	1.01	.08	.16 1.08
Employed full-time	.01	.14	1.01	-.01	.14 .99
Gender					
Father and daughter	-.10	.15	.90	.07	.15 1.07
Mother and son	-.28	.15	.76	-.56***	.15 .57
Mother and daughter	-.22	.16	.80	-.05	.16 .96
Geographic proximity (>15 minutes omitted)					
Co-residing	1.67***	.20	5.31	1.14***	.21 3.13
No co-residence; within 15 minutes traveling time	.35***	.10	1.41	.38***	.10 1.47
Estimated parameters					
Deviance	1	22	1	22	
	3151.8	2967.7	3160.9	2924.5	

Note: e^B = exponentiated B.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

DISCUSSION

Over the past few decades, sociologists and demographers have reinforced the idea that the macrostructural trends that have taken place in Western societies have been destructive to traditional family functions, family support, in particular. Previous studies have considered the effects of macrostructural trends on intergenerational relationships, focusing predominantly on demographic changes. This article has taken a different approach and focuses on the extent to which individual consequences of macrostructural trends are related to contact and support exchange between parents and adult children. We tested the hypothesis that because of social changes in the Netherlands (which have influenced the life experiences of individuals and their families), parents and children would have had fewer opportunities for contact and support exchange in 2002 than they did in the beginning of the 1990s.

Our analyses first showed that contact and support exchange could only be partially explained by these opportunities. Parents who have divorced have less contact with their children. Those who have no new partner give less emotional support. Given that fathers who have divorced often become marginal in the lives of their children, this suggests that they may have less contact and receive less support when they age. The timing of the divorce, or re-partnering after widowhood, most probably also plays an important role in this process. Also, the quality of the early relationship between parents and children influences later contact and exchanges of support (Aquilino, 1999). Family structures have become more heterogeneous, with many divorced parents remarrying, thereby allowing a stable, child-supportive family context to develop (Bengtson, 2001). Hence, the full effect on parent-child relations of marital instability and new relationships after widowhood will not be seen until the cohorts in our study become dependent.

The effects of labor-force participation differed in the various analyses. Whereas no effect of employment of parents and the adult child was found on contact, we did find a negative effect from the parent's employment on instrumental support given and a positive effect from the adult child's part-time employment on support given. Therefore, in general, contrary to what might be expected, employment does not negatively influence the contact and emotional support exchanged between parents and children. Part-time work enables women to combine the tasks of work and support; however, this may change in the future if the full-time employment of women increases further in the Netherlands. Tension may then be placed on the equilibrium between work and family, which, in turn, may result in a decreasing capacity to provide support to aged parents. Considering that our study pertains to parents who have few functional problems, we might have found different results for the employment of children if we had included parents who were older and had more functional limitations.

The results of our study also show that family support goes beyond the nuclear household. Consistent with earlier findings (Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1992), the results confirm that the process of children leaving the parental home is a major transition in the life of the parents. In particular, parents with children coresiding have more contact, exchange more instrumental support and receive more emotional support than those who do not coreside with children. According to Aquilino (1997), leaving home reduces the intensity of the parents' relationships with adult children. Both the parent and adult child are entering a new stage of the life course, and roles and expectations are reevaluated. However, although parents and children coreside less (both between cohorts as well as longitudinally), they more often live nearby. We find that parents who have adult children living nearby have more contact and exchange more instrumental support with their children than those who live farther away.

There are also other effects of the characteristics of the respondent, child and relationship on contact and support exchange: Parents with fewer children have on average more contact (which will be discussed below). Consistent with previous research, parents with a higher education have less contact but exchange more emotional support with their children. Although functional capacity had no effect on contact frequency, consistent with prior research, parents with a higher functional capacity give more support than those with less functional capacity. Parents with younger or single children have more contact with their children. These children are still in the launching phase of their life course and often have not yet committed themselves to labor participation and a new family, so their attention is probably still directed towards the family of origin. In contrast to our expectations, having grandchildren has a positive effect on contact. The increased participation of women in the labor force may require grandparents to help to care for their grandchildren. Finally, confirming the well-known role of women as kin keepers, mothers and daughters have more contact with each other and exchange more emotional support.

This study shows that, when respondent, child and relationship characteristics are controlled, the contact was more frequent and more support was exchanged between parents and children in 2002 than in 1992. These results reflect both cohort and period effects, controlled for age effects. It may be argued that our results show, on the one hand, that contact and support exchange increase per child and, on the other hand, that parent-child relationships actually become less important over historical time because there are fewer of them. On the basis of our results, it is indeed not possible to conclude whether there is an increase of contact and support at the family level. Calculations at the family level cannot be made because we do not know whether the children all visit at the same time or separately, and our measurements of support exchange are not exact.

Given that the pattern for increased contact and exchange of support over historical time can only be partially explained by opportunity, how can this increase be explained? We believe that the changes that have taken place in attitudes towards the family have had a more profound effect on parent-child relationships than social developments such as the increase of

female participation in the labor market or an increase in divorce and remarriage. Hence, the hypothesis that contact and exchanges of support between parents and children have decreased because of social change cannot be confirmed. Part of the late cohort can be characterized as the protest generation (compare the Vietnam-generation in the U.S.), who were in their so-called formative years during the cultural revolution of the 1960s and '70s (Sanders & Becker, 1994). In this respect Inglehart (1977) has argued that socialization during the formative years leads to value orientations that remain relatively stable during the life course. In comparison to the early cohort, the attitudes and behavior of the late cohort are guided more by principles of equality and autonomy (Stacy, 1993). Consequently, the greater autonomy in these relationships allows for relationships based on individual "commitments" rather than "fixed obligations" (Finch, 1989). We can assume that this has an effect on the parenting of this cohort, accentuating freedom, companionship and negotiation. An important characteristic of negotiation is intensive communication about differing opinions among parents and children (Du Bois-Reymond, 1998), which ultimately results in more contact. Still, there might also be other explanations for the increased contact between parents and adult children, such as the technological advances that allow new forms of communication. Frequency of contact is no longer confined to face-to-face contact but also includes other forms of contact such as telephoning or emailing.

Longitudinally, we find that as parents age (from about 60 until they are around 70), there is less contact with their adult children and less support is exchanged. This agrees with earlier research confirming that both parents and children tend to devote less time and energy to intergenerational relationships during this "empty nest" phase, which is confirmed by our results. Moreover, this finding provides an explanation for the persistence of the notion of a "breakdown" of family support. The idea that contact and support decline over time is genuine; however, it may only hold for certain periods in one's life, such as when children go through the transition from young adulthood to mature adulthood and become more independent. When comparing our two cohorts, we find no evidence for the myth of family decline, confirming, the reasoning that the "good old days" are not earlier periods in our social history, but a period in the history of each individual and family (Brody, 1985). The combination of a cohort and longitudinal analysis in this study has allowed us to study intergenerational relationships from different perspectives. However, we were not able to fully address the different effects because we could not apply a cohort-sequential design. From the cohort analysis, it is therefore difficult to disentangle whether the effects were primarily related to cohort or period; within the longitudinal analysis, we cannot be conclusive about the age and period effects. We believe that the reverse results – an increase between cohorts and a decrease longitudinally – suggests that the longitudinal results show an effect of aging and not of period.

A number of limitations of the study should be noted. We had no information on the attitudes towards the family, such as norms on filial obligation and which qualities the family environment should encourage in children. Consequently, we have no empirical evidence about how family attitudes have changed or what possible connections there might be between attitudes towards family and intergenerational relationships. We also did not assess any changes that might have taken place in the attitudes people have towards divorce, labor-force employment or geographical proximity, in relation to contact and support within family relationships. On the individual level, for example, women may choose to either participate in the labor force or to commit themselves to family care. On the societal level, changes may take place concerning norms about the combination of work and care-giving to kin. Another limitation is that the information on contact frequency and support exchanged was obtained from the parents. As outlined in the descriptions of the measurements, there is low veridicality of the reports of parents and those of their children on relationship characteristics, in particular on the instrumental support exchanged and, even more, on the emotional support exchanged. There are always different perspectives in a personal relationship, especially if it concerns the parent-child relationship. However, the results of a previous study by Klein Ikkink, Van Tilburg, and Knipscheer (1999) show numerous congruencies across the parents' and children's reports with respect to the factors that influence the support parents receive.

In sum, our results show that the functions of families have not been reduced. They support the existence of a family in which parents and adult children maintain frequent contact and exchange support while residing in separate households. Moreover, we find that across cohorts, parents have more contact and exchange more support with their adult children when we take into account the decline in coresidence. Macrostructural changes have had a less destructive influence on parent-child relationships than we initially thought. Our results show only a small snapshot of a larger picture of family change within a post-modern era. Whether smaller families are characterized by improved relationships will be even more evident within future cohorts and requires further research. We therefore encourage future research over longer periods and with later cohorts.

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**4 MEASURING OLDER ADULTS' FILIAL RESPONSIBILITY
EXPECTATIONS: EXPLORING THE APPLICATION OF A VIGNETTE
TECHNIQUE AND AN ITEM SCALE**

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on two conceptually distinct measures of the filial responsibility expectations of older adults: an attitude item scale and a vignette technique. Data was based on 1553 respondents aged 61 to 92, who participated in the Longitudinal Aging Study Amsterdam (LASA) in 1998-1999. The results showed that the item scale had multiple dimensions of filial expectations. Older adults distinguished between emotional-, instrumental-, contact- and information-oriented expectations. The vignette technique resulted in a unidimensional measurement of expectations. The intercorrelation between the scores of the item scale and vignette technique were modest, indicating a certain amount of overlap. Child characteristics incorporated into the vignettes added to the specificity of measurements of the filial expectations. We observed that older adults were more likely to have expectations for care from an adult child who is not employed and does not have children. Minor differences between sons and daughters were observed.

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on two conceptually distinct measures concerning the filial responsibility expectations of older parents—an important theme within the study of parent-child relationships in general and the informal support exchanged within these relationships in specific. Filial expectations are a reflection of general social norms, that is, a set of beliefs about how people ought to behave in a certain situation (Nydegger, 1991). An understanding of the role of the norm of filial obligation in family relationships requires an understanding of how such general rules are interpreted in specific settings (Rossi & Rossi, 1990). In this study, we defined filial responsibility expectations as a societal attitude towards the duty of adult children to meet the needs of older parents (Blieszner & Mancini, 1987), specifically addressing *parental* expectations for filial support.

The measurement instruments found in the literature appear to assess different aspects of filial expectations, yet there have been few investigations of the relationships between these measures. One might argue whether filial expectations focus on the relative merits of assessing filial responsibility as a general set of societal norms or conceptualizing filial expectations as a set of expectations about appropriate behavior. The solution to this controversy may depend on the measurement instruments employed emphasizing either a more general norm or specific expectations. Does the use of different methods, therefore, specify filial expectations, or do different measures produce convergent findings about the same empirical domain? Answering this question could clarify discrepancies in previous findings, advance our understanding of the expectations of older parents for care and aid researchers interested in selecting measures sensitive to the phenomena of interest.

In past research on filial expectations, researchers have relied predominantly on attitude measurements for their analysis (Hamon & Blieszner, 1990; Lee, Dwyer & Coward, 1993; Seelbach & Sauer, 1977), although the vignette technique has also been used (Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Brody, Johnsen & Fulcomer, 1984). Vignettes consist of short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, and the respondent is invited to respond to the characters' situation. Vignettes have been widely used as a complementary technique alongside other data collection methods. They can be employed either to enhance existing data or to generate data untapped by other research methods (Barter & Renold, 2000).

The Vignette Approach

In addition to the application of the vignette approach in the study of filial expectations (Brody et al., 1984; Finch, 1987; Roff & Klemmack, 1986) the vignette technique has also been employed by researchers from various disciplines to study a range of topics, including cognition and motivation (Stolte, 1994), end-of-life medical decision-making (Denk, Benson, Fletcher, & Reigel, 1997), peer violence in children's homes (Barter & Renold, 2000) and public judgments of appropriate punishment for crime (Rossi, Simpson,

& Millar, 1985). Many of these studies typically employ vignettes within a quantitative paradigm, generally as a self-contained method or following a large-scale survey questionnaire, however, some studies employ vignettes within qualitative paradigms. The common element is the hypothetical situation: this may be short and simple or longer and complex. Some of the vignettes were followed by fixed-choice responses; some included fixed-choice plus an open-ended question and others included only open-ended questions.

The specific procedure applied within the vignette approach determines the data that is ultimately acquired. The predominantly employed factorial survey design (Rossi & Nock, 1982) presents respondents with independent samples from a fully crossed vignette universe allowing many dimensions and levels within dimensions to be employed. The statistical qualities of the resulting data set permit unbiased estimates of the contributions of each of the several dimensions incorporated into the vignettes to the overall judgment. In a study on kinship norms, Rossi and Rossi (1990) include 1628 unique vignettes in the total set of all possible vignettes. Each respondent answered a general question for a random selection of these vignettes. This procedure allows group differences to be measured as long as there is an approximately equal distribution of the different vignette versions across the sample groups. However, only sub-samples of the total sample can be compared when looking at specific combinations of dimensions. Therefore, one sacrifices the opportunity to compare responses to specific circumstances across the survey population as a whole (Finch, 1987).

The technique of altering the circumstances within a single vignette is a distinctive feature of a number of British studies (e.g., Finch, 1987). In a study on obligations between relatives, Finch includes four vignettes where respondents are asked to make a judgment on a given set of circumstances which change over time, and in which the type of response elicited both varies between vignettes and includes an open-ended element. This procedure enables more insight into complex situations, but, as Finch also acknowledges, the issue of what triggers a response is not wholly resolved. Finally, it may be argued that the factorial survey design provide judgments of events that typify situations of real-life experience, however, also include events which are relatively unusual occurrences. We can wonder whether the dynamics of judgment will operate in the same way for both situations (Durham, 1986). When a design is applied, such as in our study, where all respondents receive the same vignette, using a limited number of dimensions, aimed at a real-life situation, some of these objections become less valid. Moreover, since the stimulus is held constant over a heterogeneous group of respondents, the research instrument secures uniformity, which is a prerequisite for the reliability of the scores. In conclusion, there are different vignette designs, each with their own specific procedures, which in turn determine the data that is ultimately acquired.

Comparison of the Vignette Approach with the Item Scale

The employment of different measures results in different outcomes. In contrast to the item scale instrument, the vignette technique offers the opportunity to specify expectations according to various circumstances, such as the amount of help needed by the parent and whether a child is married. Using the item scale, Hamon and Blieszner (1990), for example, found that older parents did not expect adult children to adjust their work schedules to help them. In contrast, Brody et al. (1984), employing the vignette technique, observed that a majority of the oldest women expected working unmarried daughters to adjust their work schedules if the mother required help. Furthermore, the importance of specifying situational characteristics is stressed by the results of a study by Peek, Coward, Peek, & Lee (1998), who applied two instruments to measure expectations of filial responsibility. First, an item scale was used to measure social norms about older parent-child relationships. Second, specific expectations were measured by asking older parents to indicate to whom they would turn if they felt lonely, needed help, did not have enough money to pay a bill or could no longer live alone. Peek et al. observed that the characteristics of the children had a greater effect on specific expectations for care than did the personal circumstances of the older parent. The extent to which parents' expectations for assistance are actually fulfilled by their children is estimated more precisely when the children's particular circumstances are taken into account than when global norms are measured.

Expanding on previous research, the first instrument used in this study is a modified item scale of filial responsibility expectations. Most researchers have used only a small number of filial expectation items (Blieszner & Mancini, 1987; Lee, Coward, & Netzer, 1994; Seelbach & Sauer, 1977), with questions concerning, for example, the expectancy to live together or nearby, or for the children to take financial care of older parents. With a limited number of items, only a specific domain within the broader concept of filial expectations can be studied. Hamon and Blieszner (1990) revised previously used scales of filial responsibility expectations and included items on contemporary issues, resulting in a 16-item scale that goes beyond this limitation and might result in scores with increased content validity. Although filial responsibility expectations have generally been treated as a unidimensional construct, we believe that the broader concept includes different types of filial expectations. Filial expectations are directed towards the behavior of adult children and ample evidence confirms that parents have frequent contact and receive a substantial amount of emotional and instrumental support from adult children (Mancini & Blieszner, 1989). Based on social support literature we also distinguish information-oriented expectations. According to the content of the items, we split the scale into four dimensions: emotional, instrumental, contact and information-oriented.

The second instrument is based upon the vignette technique. In the current study we employ a design with a limited number of vignette situations specifically aimed at the respondent. Four vignettes are employed within one overall vignette using only a limited number of dimensions. We attempt to differentiate between the situations of the adult children, therefore, the situations, which were least common, were not included because they were least likely to occur in real life, for example an adult son who is not married, has no job and does not have children. The details of the vignette, specifying various features of its context, enhance the respondent's capacity to make normative statements about a comprehensive set of social circumstances. In contrast, studies using an item scale do not systematically take into account specific characteristics of the children, such as gender, employment, marital status and availability of their own children, all of which have been viewed in the filial responsibility literature as relevant (e.g., Lee et al., 1993). To give an example, an older parent may expect most support from an adult child who has more time, or who has fewer child-care or employment responsibilities. However, another older parent may have the same expectations for all children, irrespective of their situation.

In this study, we test the construct validity of filial responsibility expectations. We hypothesize that the scale has multiple dimensions of filial expectations (hypothesis 1). Considering the specific set of circumstances of the vignette we hypothesize that the vignette technique can be perceived as a unidimensional construct (hypothesis 2). Finally, we test the convergent validity of both instruments. We investigate whether the properties of the vignette technique in measuring expectations of filial responsibility are complementary to those of the item scale. This may shed more light on the specific dimensions of the expectations and take into account the links between filial expectations and the situation of the adult children in the family. We hypothesize that there are moderate positive relationships between corresponding dimensions of filial expectations represented by each scale, with the dimensions of the vignette technique providing additional information on the specific situations of the children (hypothesis 3).

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Respondents

Data were available for older people who participated in the Longitudinal Aging Study Amsterdam (LASA) (Deeg & Westendorp-de Serièrè, 1994). This study used a stratified random sample of 3805 men and women born between 1908 and 1937 (Knipscheer, De Jong Gierveld, Van Tilburg, & Dykstra, 1995). The sample was taken from the registers of 11 urban and rural municipalities in the east, south and west of the Netherlands, regions that represent differences in religion and urbanization in the country. The oldest individuals in these areas, particularly the oldest men, were over-represented in the sample. The response rate was 62%.

During the fourth wave (1998-1999) data were collected from 2076 older people (55% of the respondents who were interviewed at baseline) by means of a face-to-face interview that included the vignette technique, followed by a written questionnaire using the item scale. Reasons for attrition were the death of the respondent (30%), refusal (11%), illness or cognitive impairment (3%), or the respondent had moved to an unknown destination or abroad (2%). The main reason for dropping out was due to mortality which, in a sense is not a problem, because it is a natural phenomenon that not only occurs in the study sample but also in the total population. Respondents who refused, more often did not have children compared to those in the final sample ($\chi^2 = 5.1$, $df = 1$, $p < .02$). There were no associations between respondents who refused and activities of daily living, general health, and frequency of contact with children. We can, therefore, conclude that dropout is not selective for our sample.

Two hundred two respondents had a short interview by phone or by proxy, leaving 1874 respondents who were interviewed face-to-face. In the present study, only community dwelling respondents ($n = 1780$) who had living children ($n = 1596$) were included. Interviews that had to be shortened because of frailty ($n = 90$), had to be broken off ($n = 12$) or where too much information was missing ($n = 33$) were not included. This resulted in 1461 respondents for whom data were available for the vignette. There was no information available from the written questionnaire for 185 respondents because of non response (leaving $n = 1411$). Data for both filial responsibility instruments were available for 1319 respondents, and for 1553 respondents, there were data from either one or both instruments.

The sample of 726 men and 827 women were between 61 and 92 years of age, with a mean age of 73.4. Most of the respondents reported that they had high functional capacity. Only 24% reported no chronic illness. A total of 61% of the respondents were married, less than 1% were unmarried, 6% divorced and 33% widowed. A further 66% of the respondents had a partner, 1% had stepchildren only and 6% had both stepchildren and own children.

Measurements

The authors and a native speaker of Dutch independently translated the 16-item English scale into Dutch, after which the authors combined the translations into one version (Table 4.1). As a check, an English native speaker translated this version back into English. Discrepancies between the original and the retranslated English version were minor, so no further changes were required. Two items that are deemed less important by both older parents and adult children (Hamon & Blieszner, 1990) were excluded from the scale: children who live at a distance should write their parents once a week; older parents should be able to live with one of their adult children. Two new items were added: one directed towards communication (item 5) and one related to an ever-changing health-care system (item 14). The respondent is informed that we are interested in their opinion concerning their filial expectations, therefore assuming they answer within the context of a need for care.

Table 4.1Descriptive Statistics for Items on the Filial Responsibility Scale ($n = 1,411$)

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	Children should live close to their parents	2.7	1.3
2	Children should take care of their sick parents	2.6	1.2
3	Children should give their parents financial support	2.1	1.1
4	Children who live nearby should visit their parent at least once a week	3.4	1.3
5	Children should phone their parents on a regular basis	3.8	1.1
6	Children should feel responsible for their parents	3.2	1.3
7	Children and parents should be together at special occasions, like Christmas and weddings	4.0	1.1
8	Parents should be able to talk to their children about matters of personal importance, which have influence on their lives	4.1	1.0
9	Children should give emotional support to their parents	3.7	1.1
10	Children should be willing to give up free time for their parents	2.6	1.1
11	In emergencies children should make room for their parents in their home	2.7	1.2
12	Children should offer advice to their parents	3.2	1.1
13	Children should adjust their work situation in order to help their parents, e.g., by working less overtime or temporarily working less hours	2.1	1.1
14	Children should monitor the quality of care given to their parents	3.4	1.2
15	Children should adjust their situation at home in order to help their parents, e.g., assign activities to others or put activities aside temporarily	2.4	1.1
16	Children should familiarize their parents with health care services	3.7	1.1

Note: Possible answers were (1) *totally disagree*, (2) *disagree*, (3) *neither agree nor disagree*, (4) *agree*, (5) *totally agree*.

Four hypothetical situations were developed as vignettes (Table 4.2). Respondents were instructed to disregard their own family circumstances and imagine they are in a hypothetical situation. Respondents were asked what adult children should or should not do in a hypothetical situation in which an 80-year-old widowed parent, with children, needs daily care for a period of three weeks. It was assumed that the 80-year-old widowed parent had four children: Mary, a working, married daughter with children; Sophia, a non-working, married daughter with children; Emily, a single, working daughter with no children; and John, a working, married son with children. Five questions were asked for each child. The sequence of the four children was randomly chosen and varied from one respondent to the next.

Procedure

The answering patterns for both instruments were described. In addition, a more condensed method was chosen for the vignette technique. Specifically, we wanted to know whether the characteristics of the hypothetical children (employment, having children and gender) were related to parent's filial expectations with respect to giving care, adjusting home, adjusting work, improving the contact and satisfaction. For each respondent and each of these five relationship aspects, there are responses to the situation of four hypothetical children. Five multi-level logistic regression analyses (Rasbash & Woodhouse, 1995) were conducted with the respondents at a higher level of analysis and the four responses on the hypothetical children on the lower level. Three dummy variables were created and entered in the equations as explanatory variables, with Mary as the reference category: to see if there were employment differences, Sophia was compared to Mary; to assess differences between (grand)children, Emily was compared to Mary; and to assess whether there were gender differences, John was compared to Mary. The odds ratio (OR) expresses the effect of a specific predictor: the effect is positive if $OR > 1$, negative if $OR < 1$, and there is no effect if $OR = 1$.

We reviewed the homogeneity of the scores from two measures of the expectations for care of older parents. The postulated existence of one global dimension for the item scale was tested by means of confirmatory factor analysis with the LISREL program (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1988). We assumed equal variances of error terms and unrelated error terms and we therefore applied the maximum likelihood (ML) estimation procedure. We adopted the procedure and evaluation criteria for model fit recommended by Hu and Bentler (1998, 1999). More specifically, we applied the combinational rules of $CFI \geq .95$ and $SRMR \leq .08$. Postulating different concept dimensions assessed construct validity. For the item scale, an expert panel of ten researchers in the field of gerontology classified the 16 items into four dimensions: emotional (items 6, 7, 8, 9), instrumental (2, 3, 10, 11, 13, 15), contact (1, 4, 5) and information expectations (12, 14, 16). As an alternative for the existence of one global dimension the model with four dimensions of the item scale was tested by means of confirmatory factor analysis.

Table 4.2

Properties of the Filial Responsibility Vignette (N = 1,461)

	Mary:		Sophia:		Emily:		John:	
	Married, Daughter, Children, Employed	% agree	Married, Daughter, Children, Unemployed	% agree	Not married, Daughter, No children, Employed	% agree	Married, Son, Children, Employed	% agree
		H_i		H_i		H_i		H_i
1 Should ... take care of her father/mother?		.73		.72		.72		.69
2 Should ... adjust her situation at home?		.76		.67		.70		.76
3 Should ... adjust her work situation?		.79				.66		.86
4 Should ... visit her father/mother more often?		.56		.55		.62		.63
5 Would you, if you were Mr./Mrs. Hendriks, be disappointed if ... did not take care of you?		.63		.69		.70		.60
	38		57		51		36	

Note: Possible answers were (0) *no*, (1) *yes*. Question 2 and Question 3 were asked only when the answer to Question 1 was *no*, then zero was assigned to Question 2 and 3. Question 3 for Sophia was not asked because she does not work. H_i = Item homogeneity conform Mokken's scale-analysis.

The homogeneity of the scores obtained with vignette instrument was tested by means of Mokken's scale analysis (Debets & Brouwer, 1989), which is a probabilistic version of a Guttman scale analysis. The technique assumes the existence of one underlying latent (unobservable) attribute, which is represented by a set of items related to the latent attribute. The vignette scores are dichotomous and the average proportions of agreement differed strongly across the items, which fit with this type of analysis. Scale homogeneity (Loevinger's H) and reliability (ρ), and item homogeneity (H_i) were computed. Mokken's scale-analysis is a non-parametric approach to item response theory. The reliability coefficient (ρ) can be interpreted in a similar way to Cronbach's α . Mokken scale analysis assumes the existence of a latent unidimensional scale represented by a set of items related to this scale. Scale criteria are met when all coefficients of homogeneity for pairs of items (H_{ij}) are positive, while the homogeneity coefficients for the items in relation to the scale at issue (H_i) and for the whole item set (H) do not fall below a positive constant (c). A minimum value of $c = .30$ is recommended, and a strong scale is one which all H_i and H exceed $.50$ in value. When scale criteria are met, the respondents can be ordered with respect to this latent scale by means of the proportion agreement. Furthermore, the vignette questions can also be ordered hierarchically with respect to this latent scale. For the vignette technique, dimensions were distinguished according to the four children with their different characteristics and the five questions.

In this study, convergent validity is concerned with correlations between scores derived from the item scale and the vignette technique. Additionally, multi-level logistic regression analysis was used to assess whether the filial responsibility vignette was of additional value — that is, whether the child characteristics incorporated into the vignettes added to the specificity of the filial responsibility expectations as measured by the filial responsibility item scale. To do this, questions from the vignettes were compared to corresponding items in the filial responsibility item scale. The first question of the vignettes corresponds to the item on care expectations (item 2), the second question corresponds to home adjustment (item 15), the third corresponds to work adjustment (item 13) and the fourth corresponds to contact (item 4). Logistic regression analyses were performed with the vignette score as the dependent variable and the score from the scale as explanatory variable. Each analysis consisted of three steps with entry of variables on a priori expectations. The model specified at each step is characterized by a $-2 \log$ likelihood, i.e., the deviance from fit between the data and the model. In the first step (the 0-Model) only the constant was included in the equation, to provide a standard for evaluating the change when explanatory variables were entered into the equation. Different models were compared by the difference in their deviance, which is χ^2 distributed. Within Model 1, the equation was extended with the specific item score to assess the general association between that item and the corresponding vignette score. Within Model 2, the equation was further extended with specific variables

characterizing the four vignettes to assess whether the respondent differentiated between children with different characteristics (see above).

RESULTS

Answering Patterns

The means and standard deviations of the items are shown in Table 4.1. The most strongly endorsed norms of the older adults suggest that older parents interpret the filial role as one that includes a great deal of discussion of important matters (item 8) and contact with children: making telephone calls on a regular basis or being together on special occasions (items 7 and 5). Further, older parents strongly appreciate being familiarized with available resources and receiving emotional support (items 16 and 9). Most elderly parents thought it unnecessary for children to adjust their work and family situation to help their parents (items 13 and 15). Older parents also disapproved of receiving financial assistance from their children (item 3).

The percentages of agreement for the vignette questions are shown in Table 4.2. Older parents expect most care from the married daughter who has children and does not work, followed by the unmarried daughter without children who does work. The least is expected of the married daughter and son who have children and work. The majority of the older parents who expect care from a child believe that the child should adjust his or her family situation. They also believe that an adjustment of the work situation should be made, but to a lesser extent, especially in the case of the son. Regardless of the type of child in the vignettes, the older parents agree that they expect their children to visit them more often when they need care for a short-term period. The majority of the respondents indicated that they would be most disappointed in the married daughter with children who does not work, if she did not take care of the older parent.

The parameters of the specific variables characterizing the four vignettes are shown in Table 4.3. The results of the care vignette show that the largest distinction is made in the child's employment: respondents had 3.5 times greater expectations for care from children who are not employed than from children who are employed. Second, respondents had greater expectations for care from children who do not have children of their own. Small differences between sons and daughters were observed (the OR in favor of the daughter was 1.20, which is 1: 0,83). The results of the vignette questions concerning the adjustment of home and work are parallel to the results concerning care. The vignette question on frequency of contact shows that expectations depend first on whether children have children of their own, followed by the child's employment status. The vignette question on satisfaction is analogous to the vignette question on care. Gender was not statistically significant for the vignette questions on either frequency of contact or satisfaction.

Table 4.3

Parameter Estimates of the Variables Characterizing the Four Vignettes

	Give care		Adjust home		Adjust work		Improve contact		Satisfaction	
N Respondents	1461		1461		1460		1461		1461	
N Vignette scores	5810		5817		4361		5827		5803	
	$\chi^2 = 688$		$\chi^2 = 642$		$\chi^2 = 357$		$\chi^2 = 146$		$\chi^2 = 273$	
	OR	Wald	OR	Wald	OR	Wald	OR	Wald	OR	Wald
Unemployment: Sophia (vs. Mary)	3.53	246.9 ***	3.08	183.8 ***			1.26	5.5 *	2.21	109.1 ***
No children: Emily (vs. Mary)	2.10	85.1 ***	1.95	62.8 ***	1.76	33.5 ***	1.52	16.6 ***	1.68	47.3 ***
Gender: John (vs Mary)	0.83	4.4 *	0.76	8.4 **	0.59	19.4 ***	1.13	1.6	0.93	0.9

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Note: OR = Odds ratio

On the basis of the vignette scores it can be concluded that expectations are highest for those with the most time to offer. In other words, expectations depend first on the child's employment status, then the combination of work and children, and finally, on the gender of the child. There also seems to be a connection between the care that is expected and disappointment when that care is not forthcoming. Respondents are most disappointed when the child they have the highest expectations of (the married daughter who has children and does not work) does not provide the expected care. They are least disappointed when the expected care is not provided by the married son who has children and works. It is interesting to note that the disappointment is always higher than the level of care expected from the child.

Thirty-seven percent of the respondents (545) stated that all the hypothetical children were equal; only 75 (5%) believed none were equal. This suggests that many older parents do not want to differentiate between the children. The differences found between the children may be attributed to the degree to which older parents are considerate of the children's specific situation.

Dimensionality of the Expectations

To determine the existence of one global dimension and four specific dimensions in the item scale, two models were tested by confirmatory factor analysis (hypothesis 1). The model specifying one global dimension had to be rejected ($CFI = .75$, $SRMR = .09$). Our hypothesis that the item scale is composed of four dimensions initially only partly finds support. The model distinguishing between four dimensions was poor with respect to the specification of factor covariances and factor loadings ($CFI = .89$, $SRMR = .06$). A satisfying four-factor model ($CFI = .95$, $SRMR = .04$) was achieved by including factor loadings on more than one factor for three items (1, 6 and 9) and by including a correlated error of items 13 and 15 (standardized coefficient = .19). The parallel wording of items 13 and 15 might cause this correlated error. For emotional expectations the standardized loadings were .09 for item 6, .65 for item 7, .76 for item 8 and .63 for item 9. For instrumental expectations the loadings were .35 for item 1, .73 for item 2, .66 for item 3, .34 for item 6, .25 for item 9, .77 for item 10, .66 for item 11, .69 for item 13 and .73 for item 15. For contact expectations the loadings were .23 for item 1, .78 for item 4, .72 for item 5 and .38 for item 6. For information expectations the loadings were .64 for item 12, .66 for item 14 and .66 for item 16. The correlation between the emotional and instrumental dimension was .38, and the other five intercorrelations of the dimensions were higher (between .58 and .68).

Mokken scale analysis was applied to the vignette. The means of the items in the vignette ranged from 0.10 to 0.87. One global dimension with the characteristics of a strong scale ($H = .69$ and $\rho = .94$) was found for the vignette. The findings therefore support the hypothesis that the vignette technique can be perceived as the measurement of a unidimensional construct (hypothesis 2). The sum of the scale items measuring the vignette was less symmetrically distributed (skewness = 0.47, kurtosis = -0.72), with a mean of 8.3 and standard deviation of 5.3. The H_i values are shown in Table 2. Homogeneous dimensions concerning the different children can be formed, with all subscales ranging between $H = .67$ and $.83$ and $\rho = .84$ and $.87$.

Item Scales and Vignette Technique

On the basis of the factor loadings scores for the four filial responsibility item scales were computed. These scores for emotional, instrumental, contact and information expectations and the sum of the scores for the vignette correlated weakly or modestly: $r = .24$, $.49$, $.35$ and $.27$, respectively (for all $p < .001$). In order to examine the additional value of the vignette for measuring expectations for filial responsibility, vignette questions were compared to the corresponding items on the item scale. Each respondent has four scores on each question for the vignettes and each separate score on the different children was included. Three multi-level logistic regression models were examined (Table 4.4). For all four aspects, Model 1, which included the specific item scores, was a great improvement over the 0-Model, indicating convergent validity. For the expectations of care, for example, the parameter of the item score within Model 1 was 1.98, indicating that respondents who totally agree with the care item (score 5) are 15 times more likely to agree with the vignette question related to care than are those respondents who totally do not agree with the care item (score 1). The odds ratios for the other three aspects were 1.65 for home adjustment, 1.83 for work adjustment and 1.63 for contact. Estimates for the children are not shown because they do not deviate much from Table 4.4. The improvement made in step 3, expanding Model 1 by the specific variables characterizing the four vignettes (Model 2), is statistically significant for all four aspects. The findings therefore support the hypothesis that there are moderate positive relationships between corresponding dimensions of filial expectations represented by each scale, with the vignette providing additional information on the specific situations of the children (hypothesis 3). It can be concluded that the child characteristics incorporated into the vignettes add to the specificity of measurements of the filial expectations.

Table 4.4

Fit of Three Models on the Relationship between the Two Filial Responsibility Scores (Logistic Multilevel Regression)

Vignette question Item	Give care			Adjust home			Adjust work			Improve contact		
	1			2			3			4		
	2			15			13			4		
n respondent		1316			1317			1314			1309	
n vignette		5233			5245			3928			5223	
	-2LL	χ^2	df	-2LL	χ^2	df	-2LL	χ^2	df	-2LL	χ^2	df
0 Model	6393			5856			2506			3478		
Model 1: Adding item score	5709	684	1	5444	412	1	1891	616	1	2922	556	1
Model 2: Adding vignette characteristics	4881	828	3	4709	734	3	1505	386	2	2847	75	3

Note: Differences between the model and the data are indicated by the -2 Log Likelihood (LL).

DISCUSSION

This study has advanced our knowledge about the dimensions and the relationship between two conceptually distinct measures of the filial responsibility expectations of older parents in a large representative sample of older people. To date, most investigators have focused on expectations of filial responsibility as one dimension. However, the use of the item scale in this study emphasize that older parents do not so much recognize certain filial obligations to be fulfilled by adult children in general, which would be confirmed by the existence of one overall dimension, but instead distinguish between emotional-, instrumental-, contact- and information-oriented expectations. This confirms earlier findings that older parents have higher emotional-oriented filial expectations than instrumental filial expectations (Hamon & Blieszner, 1990). An additional interesting finding is that three items load on more than one factor and seem ambiguous with respect to different domains of filial expectations. For example, the expectation that children should live near to parents (item 1) concerns both contact- and instrumental oriented expectations. Contact between parents and children are a prerequisite for emotional and instrumental support. Contact between parents and children are high with children who live close to parents. Specifying different kinds of filial expectations in future research could provide more insight into the relationship between filial expectations, actual support given and received, and the effect this has on the well-being of the older parent.

This study also determined to what extent the scores from the vignette technique complemented those of the item scale. Moderate correlations were observed between the filial responsibility item and vignette scores, indicating that the two instruments have a certain amount of overlap. It could be commented that the comparability between the scale items and vignettes seem only to correspond in situations where the parent is in poor health and needs short-term assistance, however, we believe that the respondents place the item questions within the context of a need for care. Moreover, looking specifically at the strength of agreement for the care, adjustment of work and family life items these are somewhat lower for the item scale than vignette. This may indicate that, as a general norm there is less agreement on how strongly the normative prescriptions should apply, however within a specific situation the conditionality becomes clearer (see also Jasso & Opp, 1997). Therefore, the norm is shared to a certain extent by parents but they differ in the intensity with which they subscribe to the norm.

The vignette complements the item scale by generating data untapped by the item scale. For example, the adult child's employment status appears to influence the older parent's expectations. Whether the adult child has children of his or her own has a slightly weaker influence, the child's gender was found to be even less important. This is partly consistent with findings from other studies. Brody, Johnsen, Fulcomer, & Lang (1983) found some evidence for equalitarian norms concerning the care of aging parents. A majority of the three generations of women they studied favored that sons should share the care of elderly parents equally with daughters. Roff and Klemmack (1986) also observed that both daughters and sons in dual-earner couples were equally expected to help and to maintain contact with their parents. However, when filial roles were framed in specific terms (sons should do the same kind of household chores as daughters for their elderly parents) rather than in general terms, the levels of endorsement decreased over the three generations (Brody et al., 1983). Consistent with the findings of Brody et al. (1984), respondents in our study who had filial expectations predominantly believed that the working single daughter without children should adjust her work situation. When we take a closer look at the differences between the specific variables characterizing the four vignettes, our study also shows that the expectations of respondents were only differentiated by the gender of the child when an adjustment of the home or work situation was required. This implies that older parents expect care from both daughters and sons, unless a specific adjustment is required. A possible explanation for this could be that the respondents believed it was easier for daughters to adjust their situation than sons (Finley, 1989).

Limitations of the Vignette Approach in this Study

One of the most interesting aspects of using the vignette technique in survey research is that because the characteristics used in the situation description can be systematically varied, it is possible to analyze differences in people's responses. However, using the vignette technique within a quantitative paradigm restricted the design of the vignette to a certain extent, for example, in regard to any modification of the vignette's content. Vignettes also offer the opportunity to manage the complexity of the social world by isolating certain aspects of a given social issue (Barter & Renold, 2000). In the current study, only a limited amount of child characteristics were selected, namely, gender, employment, marital status and the presence of children. For future studies, different forms of employment (part-time, full-time), the number of children within the family and the quality of the relationship between the older parent and adult child would be of interest. These are a few examples of the aspects that could influence the extent to which the older parent has expectations of a specific child.

We only presented one hypothetical situation in our vignette, which was a relatively mild form of care provision, with the care required by the hypothetical older person being only for a limited period of time. It is not known whether the expectations of older adults would deviate from our findings if more intensive care or care over a longer period were

needed. Furthermore, the linguistic representation of the situation in the vignette could influence the degree to which the informants considered their own current personal situation when answering. When a vignette is presented in the third person, a more general norm may be assessed; when presented in the second or first person, the informant may be more likely to take his or her own situation into account. In previous research, this has varied, with some vignettes presented in the third person and some in the second person. Future research will need to compare various representations of the vignette technique.

The procedure we applied in this study also had consequences for the data acquired. We did not present respondents with all the possible combinations or unique vignettes. One could comment that interaction effects and the effects of any one dimension cannot be estimated without bias. However, we do not believe our results are less reliable than when we would have fully crossed all vignette dimensions (see further Hox, Kreft, & Hermkens, 1991, on reliability of factorial surveys). As Finch (1987) states in her comparison of different vignette procedures when it is the specific aim to study causal connections it is important to vary the elements systematically, however where research is concerned more with subjective definitions it is less obligatory. It is not so much the design which is the issue, in the context of the interest of the researchers, but *how many* there are, what *form* they assume and what their *impact* is on the results of the analysis (Durham, 1986).

Choosing Between a Vignette Approach and an Item Scale

In summary, our findings show that the child characteristics incorporated into the vignettes add to the specificity of measurements of filial expectations. The combination of methods does not produce *one* unique picture of reality; instead, the different results combine like a sort of jigsaw puzzle to produce a broader image of reality. Still, there are no rules to guide the use of either or both methods. In some cases, it will make sense to employ the item scale, particularly when it is important to distinguish between dimensions of expectations. In other circumstances, the vignette technique might be more useful to obtain a differentiated picture of the situation, especially when it is important to obtain information beyond the informant's current personal situation. This is useful for two types of research (Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000): first, studies of sensitive social phenomena, where candid and personal responses could be difficult to elicit; second, studies that assess how awareness and attitude might shape future behavior. The choice of measure will depend largely on the focus and theoretical assumptions underlying the study at hand.

Because filial responsibility expectations form in a dynamic situation, it is important to consider the presentation of ongoing relationships with other people, which are continually negotiated. A first suggestion for future studies is to conduct research on people who are already in established social relationships and investigate how they behave together and describe their social relationships interpersonally. We are thinking, for example, of studies of interaction during a caregiving situation, where both parent and child(ren) are interviewed,

using both the attitude scale and vignette technique, before, during and after the caregiving takes place. The use of longitudinal research may be one way of getting closer to the real time structure of ongoing personal relationships. In the event that only cross-sectional data is available, the vignette technique has the advantage of being able to build changes into the story which occur over time and focusing the questions on what should happen next (see Finch, 1987). Another suggestion concerns the extent to which a vignette can be compared to real-life situations and responses. Hughes (1998) noted that we do not know enough about the relationship between vignette and real life responses to be able to draw any parallels between the two. Moreover, it has been argued that the vignettes produce unrealistic results because they are not directly comparable to real life (Faia, 1980). These remain unresolved measurement issues.

In sum, the vignettes in conjunction with an attitude scale within a quantitative survey may prove to be a useful tool for exploring complex issues like filial expectations of older parents. The data are valuable and reflective of the filial expectations parents have; the more the vignette reflects aspects of real life situations, the more generalizable the findings will likely be. The employment of vignette techniques is under-represented in social science research focusing on norms and values. We believe the vignette technique has a great deal of potential and needs to be further developed, tested and employed in the study of filial expectations.

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5 INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND LONELINESS OF OLDER PARENTS: DO FILIAL RESPONSIBILITY EXPECTATIONS MATTER?

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of parental filial expectations on the relationship between child contact and support and the loneliness of older parents. Data was based on 952 respondents, aged 64 to 94, from the Longitudinal Aging Study Amsterdam (LASA). Filial expectations were observed to have a moderating effect on levels of emotional loneliness. Parents with high emotional expectations, who have contact with their children, are less emotionally lonely. Parents who have low instrumental expectations and receive instrumental support from children are more socially lonely. Furthermore, the results show that child contact and support do not mediate the effect of filial expectations on parental loneliness. Filial expectations are therefore important, but this importance is conditional or direct, rather than indirect.

INTRODUCTION

Ample evidence confirms that older parents have frequent contact and receive a substantial amount of social support from adult children (Mancini & Blieszner, 1989). It is, however, not evident that older parents derive psychological benefits from having contact or receiving social support from their children; some might see it as a loss of their autonomy, while others may recognize the benefits. The relationship between parents and adult children is framed by norms of obligation that mandate that adult children and parents assist and care for each other over the life course (Lye, 1996). Filial responsibility expectations can be seen as a reflection of these norms. We suggest that the relationship between contact with and support from adult children and the psychological well-being of older parents is influenced by filial responsibility expectations.

Filial expectations are defined as an attitude about children's responsibility towards the maintenance of parental well-being, emphasizing matters of duty, protection and care (Blieszner & Hamon, 1992). This attitude refers to the extent to which adult children are expected to provide support and care to their aging parents (Seelbach & Sauer, 1977). Although filial responsibility expectations have generally been treated as a unidimensional construct, we believe that the concept includes different types of filial expectations (Van der Pas, Van Tilburg, & Knipscheer, 2005). Filial expectations are directed towards the behavior of adult children, and ample evidence confirms that parents receive a substantial amount of emotional and instrumental support from adult children (Mancini & Blieszner, 1989). In this study, we therefore distinguish between emotional and instrumental-oriented filial expectations.

Insofar as studies have examined the link between filial expectations and parental well-being, they have focused on morale (Quin, 1983; Seelbach & Sauer, 1977) or depression (Lee, Netzer, & Coward, 1995; Silverstein, Chen, & Heller, 1996) as an outcome of contact and/or support from children. Because feelings of loneliness are associated with dissatisfaction with social relationships (Perlman & Peplau, 1984), we believe that loneliness is an important additional dimension of psychological well-being. Specifically, loneliness has been interpreted as an unwanted discrepancy between desired and achieved levels of social contact (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). This implies that we should not only look at achieved relationships, but also at expectations or standards for social contact. Up till now there have been no studies on the role of parental expectations regarding contact in relation to the loneliness of older parents. This study focuses on contact with and support from adult children as an indicator of achieved relationships and filial responsibility expectations as a relationship standard.

Furthermore, loneliness is domain-specific with deficits in different relationships and, in a particular relationship, the consequences of becoming lonely are different (Weiss, 1973). Prior research has shown that partner and friendship relationships play an important

role in avoiding loneliness (Dykstra & De Jong Gierveld, 2004; Dykstra, 1995). Two studies suggest that the lack of or loss of children may also be associated with feelings of loneliness. Pinquart (2003) found that contact and support from children has no influence on loneliness in married older adults, but does prevent loneliness in widowed or divorced older adults. The importance of relationships with children in alleviating loneliness, therefore, seems to differ according to the situation of older parents. In a cross-cultural study, Van Tilburg et al. (1998) observed that older adults who had frequent contact with their children were less lonely than other older adults. Van Tilburg et al. suggest that the differences they found between countries might be explained by the extent to which these countries are more family oriented or individualistically oriented. In this respect, the value systems that exist concerning children, specifically the filial expectations of older adults, may play an important role. In this study we expand on these two studies by focusing specifically on the role adult children play in relation to parental loneliness.

An individual may experience social loneliness in reference to social isolation (experienced because of the lack of a broad network of social relationships with others) or emotional loneliness in reference to the lack of an intimate tie (Weiss, 1973). Although Weiss's definition of emotional loneliness implies that parent-child relationships might mitigate loneliness, studies on emotional loneliness particularly emphasize the lack of or loss of romantic ties. The focus on the partner as an intimate attachment has led to limited evidence in regard to the adult child as a close relationship. It is therefore unclear whether adult children play a role in the emotional loneliness of older parents or whether adult children are seen more as part of the network of social relationships that prevent social isolation. In this study we therefore focus on two forms of loneliness: emotional loneliness and social loneliness.

Theoretical background and hypotheses

The theory of mental incongruity (TMI) provides a general framework for understanding behavior in situations where there is a discrepancy between what people have and what they want (Dykstra & de Jong Gierveld, 1994). The theory of mental incongruity is a cognitive-motivational theory. It tries to explain how people perceive and evaluate their situation and how this might influence their behavior. Mental incongruity concerns the balance between mental attributes (Tazelaar, 1983): between how one thinks a situation should be – this is called the standard – and how one experiences the actual situation – this is called the cognition. Incongruity refers to an imbalance in the system, which the individual will strive to reduce. For example, an older woman expects her children to visit her at least once a week (standard) but is confronted with the fact that they do not visit this often (cognition). A solution for her mental incongruity would be to ask her children to visit more often. However, mental incongruity is not always resolved in such a simple way and may lead to disappointment and potentially result in loneliness.

The mental incongruity theory can be used to predict the likelihood of loneliness, that is, an existing incongruity accompanied by a negative evaluation of the personal network and, consequently, relationship dissatisfaction (Dykstra & De Jong Gierveld, 1994). Specifically, loneliness is associated with the degree to which the older parent (a) is in a situation that is not desired and (b) is not in a situation that is desired. These conditions specify when the contact with and support received from children is inconsistent with the older parent's standards or filial expectations.

Based on this concept, we anticipate that the filial expectations of older parents moderate the relationships between child contact and support and parental loneliness. Older people who have high expectations of their adult children may be disappointed because they do not receive more, which may have a negative influence on their psychological well-being. Indeed, two previous studies, focusing on depression as a dimension of well-being, suggest that filial expectations condition the effect that child contact and support have on parental well-being (Lee et al., 1995; Silverstein et al., 1996). Specifically, Lee et al. (1995) found that support from children increased depression when parental expectations were higher; however, these results were not significant. In another study, Silverstein et al. (1996) found that oversupport (low expectations, high support) had a more negative effect on depression than undersupport (high expectations, low support). They argue that receiving support in undesired amounts compromises independence and subsequently reinforces a decline in well-being. Therefore, the (im)balance between the desired situation and the actual situation itself seems fundamental when studying child contact and support and parental loneliness.

In sum, based on these theoretical and empirical considerations, when we cross-tabulate standards and cognitions we derive a hypothesis that in four combinations distinguishes between high and low standards and high and low cognitions. When there is an imbalance between parental expectations and child contact and support, we expect a positive association with loneliness. Thus, we formulate as hypothesis 1 that the loneliness of older adults is greater when parental expectations are lower than the child contact and support (combination a) and when parental expectations are higher than the child contact and support (combination b). These two combinations of standards and cognitions are loneliness-provoking situations. Conversely, when there is a balance between parental expectations and child contact and support, we expect that there will be no association or a negative association with loneliness. More specifically, the loneliness of an older adult is less when older parents have both filial expectations and child contact and support (combination c) and when older parents have low filial expectations and no child contact and support (combination d). These latter two combinations are loneliness-deterring situations.

The association between filial expectations and parental loneliness may also be mediated by the contact and support received from the child. On the one hand, parental expectations may affect the loneliness of parents directly, in that having low filial expectations protects against disappointment, resulting in less parental loneliness (hypothesis 2a). On the other hand, parental expectations may affect the loneliness of parents indirectly through contact and support with children. Specifically, when parents have high expectations the contact with and support received from children may have been adjusted to these expectations, compared to parents with low expectations. In this respect, Peek et al. (1998) have shown that older disabled parents who have filial expectations actually do receive more assistance from children than do parents who do not have filial expectations.

In terms of standards (expectations), we assume that they guide the cognitions (contact and support). For example, an older father asks his daughter *when* she will be visiting during the Christmas holidays. The daughter can only respond positively to this question and say she will visit during the holidays. The cognition will therefore most probably adjust to the standard. Thus, we hypothesize that parents with high filial expectations may be less lonely because they have more contact and receive more support from their children than parents with low filial expectations (hypothesis 2b). As a corollary, the situation where parental expectations are low and there is child contact and support (combination a) should not exist.

METHODS

Respondents

Data were available for older people who participated in the Longitudinal Aging Study Amsterdam (LASA) (Deeg, Knipscheer & Van Tilburg, 1993). The sample for this program was originally created in the context of the “Living Arrangements and Social Networks of Older Adults” research program (Knipscheer et al., 1995). The program used a stratified random sample of men and women born between 1903 and 1937, taken from the population registers of 11 urban and rural municipalities, regions that represent differences in religion and urbanization in the Netherlands. The oldest individuals in these areas, particularly the oldest men, were over-represented in the sample. The response was 62%. Follow-ups were done in the context of LASA. During the fifth observation (2001-2002), data were collected from 1691 older people (44% of the respondents who were interviewed at baseline). Reasons for attrition were the death of the respondent (38%), refusal (13%), illness or cognitive impairment (4%), or that the respondent had moved to an unknown destination or abroad (2%).

In the present study the following respondents were not included: those who had no children ($n = 216$), those who had lost their only child by death ($n = 2$) and those who had one or more children living in the parental home ($n = 58$). Missing data caused further exclusion: 191 of the respondents had a short interview by phone or by proxy, 102 of the interviews had to be shortened or broken off because of frailty and 40 of the interviews were missing too much information. Furthermore, respondents living in nursing or residential homes ($n = 32$) and those who had either never married or were divorced ($n = 98$) were excluded. The final sample consisted of 952 respondents (436 men and 516 women) who were between 64 and 94 years of age, with a mean age of 74.7. A total of 66% of the respondents were married and 34% were widowed at the time of the study.

Measurements

Feelings of emotional and social loneliness were based on the De Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale (De Jong Gierveld & Kamphuis, 1985). Two subscales have been distinguished from this scale: emotional loneliness (Loevinger's $H = 0.48$, reliability $\rho = 0.81$) and social loneliness ($H = 0.43$, $\rho = 0.73$) (see Van Baarsen et al., 2001, for further elaboration on the measurements). Five negative items related to the lack of reliable attachments to others and the feeling of being emotionally isolated ("I often feel rejected") assess emotional loneliness. Six positive items related to the feeling that one can count on others for help and support, and a sense of social embeddedness ("There are enough people I feel close to") describe social loneliness. The mean score for social loneliness was 1.16 ($SD = 1.66$) and for emotional loneliness 0.85 ($SD = 1.29$). Total scores of the dichotomous items were between 0 and 5 and between 0 and 6, respectively. The correlation between the emotional-loneliness scale and the social-loneliness scale was .39 ($p < .001$).

Filial responsibility expectations were measured using a 16-item scale (Hamon & Blieszner, 1990). Participants could respond to each item using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from (1) "totally disagree" to (5) "totally agree." There was sufficient correlation of the item scores from the previous (T4) and the current (T5) observations (average $r = 0.44$; $p < .001$), therefore missing values in the current observation were imputed by values for the same items from the previous observation. This was partially the case for 107 respondents and totally the case for 43 respondents. Four subscales were distinguished: emotional-oriented expectations, instrumental-oriented expectations, contact-oriented expectations and information-oriented expectations (see Van der Pas et al., 2005, for further elaboration on the measurements). For the present study, we differentiate only between emotional- and instrumental-oriented filial expectations.

Four items assess emotional-oriented expectations (e.g., "Parents should be able to talk to their children about matters of personal importance, which have an influence on their lives"). Nine items describe instrumental-oriented expectations (e.g., "In emergencies, children should make room for parents in their home"). Scale scores for the two dimensions of

filial expectations were based upon factor loadings derived from confirmatory factor analysis (Van der Pas et al., 2005). The resulting scale scores have been standardized, with a higher score indicating higher filial expectations. The intercorrelations of scale scores were 0.41 ($p < .001$).

A question on contact frequency ("How often are you in touch with X?") was posed on all the parent-child relationships. The choice of answers was never, once a year or less, a few times a year, once a month, once a fortnight, once a week, a few times a week, and every day. These categories were assigned numeric values from 1 to 8, respectively. On average, intergenerational contact was frequent, with parents having an average of 184 days of contact with their children. Questions about supportive exchanges were posed on a selection of relationships, i.e., with children included in the personal network and among the 10 network members with the highest frequency of contact. The question on instrumental support received was: "How often did it happen in the past year that X helped you with daily chores in and around the house, such as preparing meals, cleaning the house, transportation, small repairs, or filling out forms?" The question on receiving emotional support was: "... that you told X about your personal experiences and feelings?" The answer categories were never, seldom, sometimes and often, which were assigned values of 0, 1, 2, and 3, respectively. On average, parents received high levels of emotional support ($M = 2.2$, $SD = 0.9$) and average levels of instrumental support ($M = 1.6$, $SD = 1.1$) from children. To obtain scores across all the children, the mean contact and support scores were identified as representative for the relationships with children. Emotional and instrumental support correlated 0.31 and contact frequency correlated 0.22 with emotional support and 0.19 with instrumental support (both $p < .001$).

Traveling distance was measured by the distance in minutes between the respondent and the child living closest to the parent. On average, most parents had a child living within half an hour's travel ($M = 0.38$, $SD = 0.69$).

To obtain information on the personal networks of the older parents, they were asked to identify their network members by name. The main objective was to identify a network that reflected the socially active relationships of the older adult in the core as well as the outer layers of the larger network (Van Tilburg, 1995). This procedure was adopted from Cochran et al. (1990). The question posed was: "Name the people you have frequent contact with and who are important to you." Network members of 18 years and older were identified in seven domains (household members, children, other family members, neighbors, contacts through work and school, members of organizations and others). The maximum network size was 67, with respondents identifying an average of 16 network relationships ($SD = 8.6$); however, some identified only one in the network. As partner status represents more than the possibility of a supportive relationship, such as opportunities for social interaction (Dykstra, 1995), it has to be considered as a separate factor. In regard to partner status, widowed respondents scored (0) and married respondents scored (1).

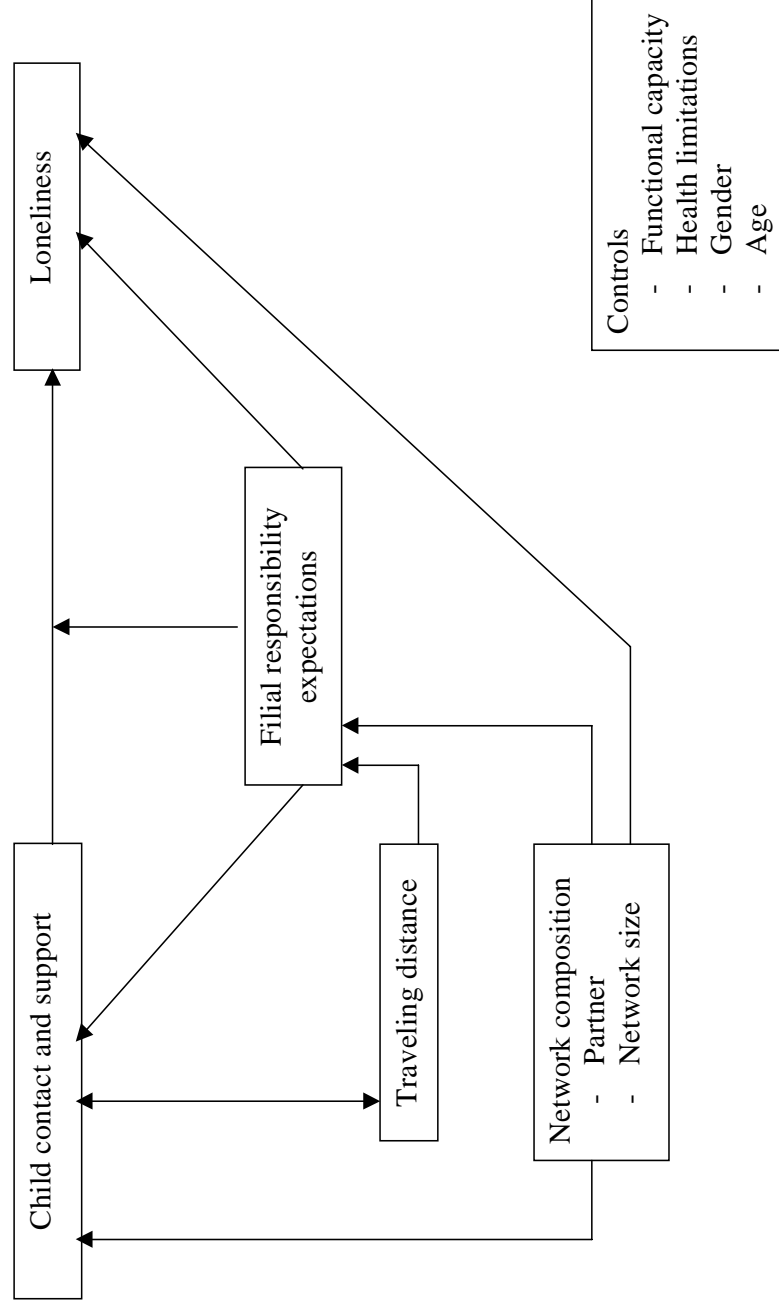
We assessed health, gender and age as control variables. Two indicators measured health, namely functional capacity and health-related limitations in functioning. The functional capacity of the parent was measured with six questions about having difficulty performing the activities of daily living, e.g., “Can you walk up and down stairs?” The five possible answers were not at all, only with help, with a great deal of difficulty, with some difficulty and without difficulty. The scales ranged from 6 (poor) to 30 (good capacity) ($H = 0.56$; $\rho = 0.84$). In addition, one single-item question was posed (“Are you restricted in your daily activities due to chronic illnesses, health disorders or handicaps?”) with possible answers being no limitations (1), light limitations (2) and severe limitations (3). Most of the respondents reported that they had high functional capacity. The correlation between functional capacity and health limitations was -0.57 ($p < .001$).

Analytical strategy

To overcome problems of confounding variables, we applied the structural equations approach. Figure 5.1 presents the major variables of the study and the implied structural relations among constructs. Model 1 was developed to test hypothesis 1. The model includes two equations, i.e., one for parents with low expectations (M minus half SD) and one for parents with high expectations (M plus half SD). The model was tested for the two dimensions of filial expectations. It is assumed that there is a conditioning effect of expectations when the equality of coefficients among parents with low and high expectations should be rejected.

Model 2 was developed to test hypothesis 2—to explain the level of loneliness of older parents by differences in filial expectations, child contact and support. The model includes multiple endogenous or dependent variables. We present the standardized solution; hence, the direct effects (parameter estimates) can be interpreted like standardized regression coefficients. In addition, the total effects (sum of the direct and indirect effects) for each explanatory variable have been computed. Since the variables within the constructs of loneliness, filial expectations, child contact and support, and network composition are likely to have large mutual associations, the causal relationships within a construct are modeled as unspecified (the double curved arrows are not included in Figure 5.1). Child contact and support mediate between filial expectations and loneliness. Also, child contact, support received and traveling distance are modeled as reciprocal. It is assumed that filial expectations and child contact and support will be higher among widowed respondents than among those who are married. Furthermore, filial expectations will be higher when children live nearby. Traveling distance is included in the model as having an effect on filial expectations and on child contact and support. Finally, the model includes the control variables.

Figure 5.1 Structural relations model specifying effects of filial responsibility expectations, traveling distance, network composition, and child contact and support on loneliness



We used LISREL 8 to produce simultaneous estimates for the structural-relations models from an input matrix of correlations among observed variables (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1993). For Model 1, expectation differences were examined by the multigroup method of analysis in the LISREL program. The fit of the models is evaluated by means of the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), which should be lower than .05, and the non-normed fit index (NNFI), which should be higher than 0.95 (Hu & Bentler, 1998). Model fit was improved by releasing the equality of coefficients across levels of expectations within Model 1. Moreover, the difference across levels of expectations within Model 1 is evaluated by $t \geq 1.96$.

RESULTS

Table 5.1 shows the results for hypothesis 1. We tested the model for different levels of emotional- and instrumental-oriented filial expectations with the independent variables and two dependent variables (emotional and social loneliness), specifically focusing on the interaction effects. The model was tested under the constraint that the effects on emotional and social loneliness of the six parameters of contact frequency and instrumental and emotional support received were equal under both the condition of low filial expectations and of high filial expectations. However, hypothesis 1 specifies that this equality should not hold. Under the condition of low expectations, we expect that a low level of child contact and support results in absence of loneliness (combination d) and a high level of child contact and support results in loneliness (combination a). Under this constraint, therefore, a positive effect of child contact and support on loneliness is expected. Under the condition of high expectations, we expect that a low level of child contact and support results in loneliness (combination b) and a high level of child contact and support results in absence of loneliness (combination c). Under this constraint, therefore, a negative effect of child contact and support on loneliness is expected.

The initial model for emotional expectations ($df = 14$, $SRMR = 0.012$, $NNFI = 1.01$) was improved by releasing a model constraint, i.e., on the equality of the parameter for the interaction of emotional loneliness and contact frequency. The results show that among parents with high emotional-oriented filial expectations, those who have a high frequency of contact with children are less emotionally lonely ($Beta = -.10$, $p < .01$); in contrast among parents with low filial expectations we did not find such an effect ($Beta = -.02$, not significant). The difference between the parameters of low and high expectations is significant, indicating an interaction effect. Furthermore, the initial model for instrumental expectations ($df = 14$, $SRMR = 0.020$, $NNFI = 0.97$) was improved by releasing a model constraint, i.e., on the equality of the parameters for the interaction of emotional loneliness and instrumental support.

LISREL Estimates of Total Effects of Structural Relations among Low and High Filial Responsibility Expectations, Child Contact and Support, and Loneliness ($n=952$)

Emotional Filial Expectations								
	Low Filial Expectations			High Filial Expectations				
	Emotional Loneliness		Social Loneliness	Emotional Loneliness		Social Loneliness		
	Beta	<i>t</i>	Beta	<i>t</i>	Beta	<i>t</i>		
Emotional support received	0.02	0.8	-0.11	-3.4***	0.02	0.8	-0.11	-3.4***
Instrumental support received	-0.01	-0.4	-0.03	-0.8	-0.01	-0.4	-0.03	-0.8
Contact frequency	-0.02	-0.4	-0.10	-3.1**	-0.10	-2.2*	-0.10	-3.1**
Partner (widowed – married)	-0.26	-4.8***	0.02	0.3	-0.43	-7.9***	-0.03	-0.6
Network size	-0.13	-3.0**	-0.17	-3.5***	-0.09	-2.0*	-0.22	-4.8***
Traveling time	0.00	0.5	0.02	1.6	0.02	1.8	0.02	2.1*
Functional capacity	-0.05	-0.8	0.04	0.7	-0.07	-1.0	-0.09	-1.5
Health limitations	0.05	0.9	0.13	2.2*	0.05	0.9	0.02	0.4
Gender (0 = male, 1 = female)	0.13	2.8**	-0.17	-3.6***	0.13	2.6**	-0.03	-0.7
Age	0.25	5.2***	0.23	4.6***	0.19	3.8***	0.08	1.6
Equation <i>R</i> ²	0.17			0.14		0.23		0.10

Fit statistics: SRMR = 0.011; NNFI = 1.01

Instrumental Filial Expectations		Low Filial Expectations				High Filial Expectations			
		Emotional loneliness		Social loneliness		Emotional loneliness		Social loneliness	
		Beta	<i>t</i>	Beta	<i>t</i>	Beta	<i>t</i>	Beta	<i>t</i>
Emotional support received		0.02	0.5	-0.13	-3.8***	0.02	0.5	-0.13	-3.8***
Instrumental support received		0.05	1.3	-0.03	-0.9	-0.07	-1.7	-0.03	-0.9
Contact frequency		-0.07	-2.2*	-0.10	-3.2**	-0.07	-2.2*	-0.10	-3.2**
Partner (widowed – married)		-0.33	-7.2***	0.01	0.2	-0.38	-8.1***	-0.02	-0.5
Network size		-0.09	-2.3*	-0.17	-4.1***	-0.13	-3.2**	-0.23	-5.5***
Traveling time		0.01	0.7	0.02	2.4*	0.01	2.2*	0.02	1.6
Functional capacity		0.00	-0.1	0.03	0.6	-0.09	-1.6	-0.10	-1.7
Health limitations		0.12	2.3*	0.11	2.1*	0.00	0.0	0.03	0.6
Gender (0 = male, 1 = female)		0.17	4.1***	-0.15	-3.6***	0.14	3.2**	-0.02	-0.6
Age		0.23	5.4***	0.21	4.8***	0.17	4.0***	0.04	0.9
Equation <i>R</i> ²		0.21			0.13	0.20			0.10
Fit statistics: SRMR = 0.018; NNFI = 0.99									

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001.

Among parents with low instrumental- oriented filial expectations, we find that those who receive instrumental support are more emotionally lonely ($Beta = .05$, not significant); in contrast among parents with high expectations we found the opposite effect ($Beta = -.07$, not significant). Although the effects were not significant the difference between the parameters of low and high expectations is significant, indicating that there is an interaction effect.

The examination of the fit statistics suggests that the final models represent a good fit to the data among both those who have high expectations and those with low expectations (emotional expectations: $df = 13$, $SRMR = 0.011$, $NNFI = 1.01$; instrumental expectations: $df = 13$, $SRMR = 0.018$, $NNFI = 0.99$). Overall, the results suggest that parents with high emotional-oriented expectations who have contact with their children are less emotionally lonely (combination c). However, when parents had low instrumental-oriented expectations and they received instrumental support from children, an increase in emotional loneliness was observed (combination a). The results therefore only partially confirm hypothesis 1—that filial expectations have a moderating effect on the association between contact and support received and parent's level of loneliness.

The results of hypothesis 2 are shown in Table 5.2. We initially expected that parental expectations would affect the loneliness of parents directly (hypothesis 2a). We found a positive relationship between instrumental filial expectations and level of emotional loneliness ($Beta = .12$, $p < .001$), but no relationship with social loneliness. These findings suggest that parents with high instrumental expectations that are not fulfilled are more disappointed and ultimately more emotionally lonely. However, we also observed that contrary to hypothesis 2a, higher levels of emotional expectations induce less social loneliness ($Beta = -.09$, $p < .01$). This seems to suggest that any effect emotional filial expectations have on the loneliness of parents would have to be an indirect one; however, the results of hypothesis 2b suggest otherwise.

For the indirect effects of filial expectations on child contact and support, we also have to consider the direct effects between the explanatory variables, which are not shown in Table 2. We found partial support for the mediating effect of child contact and support on the association between filial expectations and loneliness: only emotional-oriented filial expectations had a positive effect on emotional support received ($Beta = .14$, $p < .001$) and instrumental support received ($Beta = .07$, $p < .001$). Other effects did not reach statistical significance. The results reveal that the total effect of emotional filial expectations on social loneliness ($Beta = -.11$) (Table 5.2) largely consists of a direct effect ($Beta = -.09$). The indirect effect via emotional support received from children can be computed as $-.02$, i.e., in particular the product of the effect of emotional-oriented expectations on emotional support ($.14$) and the effect of emotional support on social loneliness ($-.09$). These results can therefore only partially confirm our hypothesis (2b)—that the effect of filial expectations on the psychological well-being of parents is an indirect effect via the support from children.

Table 5.2

LISREL Estimates of Direct and Total Effects of Structural Relations among Filial Responsibility Expectations, Child Contact and Support, and Loneliness ($n=952$)

	Emotional Loneliness				Social Loneliness			
	Direct Effects		Total Effects		Direct Effects		Total Effects	
	Beta	<i>t</i>	Beta	<i>t</i>	Beta	<i>t</i>	Beta	<i>t</i>
Filial expectations								
- Emotional	0.01	0.3	0.01	0.2	-0.09	-2.6**	-0.11	-3.2**
- Instrumental	0.12	3.8***	0.12	3.8***	0.02	0.7	0.02	0.7
Emotional support received	0.02	0.7	0.02	0.7	-0.12	-3.5***	-0.12	-3.5***
Instrumental support received	-0.02	-0.6	-0.02	-0.6	-0.02	-0.6	-0.02	-0.6
Contact frequency	-0.07	-2.2*	-0.07	-2.2**	-0.10	-3.2**	-0.10	-3.2**
Partner (widowed – married)	-0.36	-10.2***	-0.36	-10.2***	-0.03	-0.8	-0.01	-0.3
Network size	-0.11	-3.7***	-0.11	-3.6***	-0.18	-5.8***	-0.21	-6.5***
Traveling time			0.02	2.4*			0.02	2.4*
Functional capacity	0.00	0.1	-0.06	-1.4	0.00	0.1	-0.03	-0.6
Health limitations	0.07	2.1*	0.05	1.4	0.08	2.1*	0.06	1.6
Gender (0=male, 1=female)	0.02	0.5	0.13	4.2***	-0.07	-2.0*	-0.09	-2.9**
Age	0.08	2.2*	0.22	6.6***	0.12	3.2**	0.14	4.0***
Equation R^2	0.21				0.12			
Fit statistics: SRMR = 0.0092; NNFI = 0.97								

* $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$.

A number of other variables in the model have significant direct effects on parental loneliness. With respect to the marital status of parents, married parents are less emotionally lonely than widowed parents; however, no significant effect of being married was found on level of social loneliness. Furthermore, parents with a larger network size are less lonely, both emotionally and socially. Traveling distance was negatively related to child contact ($\text{Beta} = -.18, p < .001$) and instrumental support received from children ($\text{Beta} = -.19, p < .001$). The results reveal that there is a small indirect effect of traveling distance on emotional ($\text{Beta} = .02, p < .01$) and social loneliness ($\text{Beta} = .02, p < .01$).

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of parental filial expectations on the relationship between the contact with and support received from adult children and the psychological well-being of parents. Using the theoretical framework of mental incongruity, we hypothesized that filial expectations would have a moderating effect on the relationship between child contact and support and parental loneliness. Conversely, we hypothesized that child contact and support would mediate the association between filial expectations and parental loneliness.

Our results show only partial support for the moderating effect of filial expectations on the level of emotional loneliness. Consistent with prior evidence showing that contact and support received from others has a beneficial effect on well-being (Silverstein & Bengtson, 1994) we found that child contact decreases the level of parental emotional loneliness. However, this positive effect on loneliness is only found under the condition of high emotional-oriented expectations. Moreover, we also find an interaction effect of instrumental support from children and low instrumental-oriented expectations.

In this respect, the findings might be interpreted as being supportive of the social-psychological argument that perceptions of the situation influence well-being (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). The psychological benefits of support depend in part on whether the contact and support received is perceived as an appropriate response to a given need. The meaning that older parents attribute to the contact and support from children is based on the conditional expectations that are implicit in the intergenerational relationship (Bengtson & Achenbaum, 1993). In this context Peplau and Perlman (1982) have suggested that the way people cope with loneliness is by changing their needs or desires. The discrepancy between desire and actual social relationships with children may be solved through different coping mechanisms. This would seem to be the case for parents with low instrumental filial expectations. Over time parents may change their standards for appraising their situation and feelings, and standards may decrease to fit more closely with reality. Instrumental oriented expectations are aimed at help and direct care from others who are predominantly the closest to the recipient.

Therefore, it is possible that parents with low instrumental oriented expectations actually prefer to remain autonomous and may see instrumental support as a violation of their self-concept of functional competence.

The results of the mediating effect that contact and support received from children has on the parent's filial expectations and loneliness reveal that filial expectations are important, but this importance is direct rather than indirect in nature. Furthermore, we observe that parents who have emotional filial expectations are less socially lonely. Conversely, parents with instrumental filial expectations are more emotionally lonely. Weiss (1973) has argued that social loneliness can only be remedied by access to an engaging social network, and that emotional loneliness can only be remedied by the integration of an emotional attachment figure. Therefore, different loneliness-alleviating functions within specific relationships are necessary for the reduction of each kind of loneliness. Prior studies have already shown that romantic affiliations, such as partner relationships, have been identified as important predictors of emotional loneliness (Dykstra & De Jong Gierveld, 2004). Our findings suggest that children can also play a role in avoiding emotional loneliness. In this respect, DiTommaso and Spinner (1993) have distinguished between two domains of emotional loneliness: family emotional loneliness and romantic emotional loneliness, with the former aimed at the family in general and the latter aimed at a (marital) partner. The integration of kin at the family level therefore appears to be important in understanding outcomes such as well-being at the individual level.

From our results, the role that children play with respect to social loneliness seems less clear. Older parents seem more or less vulnerable to emotional and social loneliness, depending on the level of emotional-oriented and instrumental-oriented expectations. In this respect the two types of loneliness are not exclusive to specific relationships, but can occur in relation to one relationship, depending on the individual's needs or desires in regard to that specific relationship. Future research may want to examine how and when the two types of loneliness occur within one and the same relationship, such as that with a child.

Although we distinguished between different dimensions of filial expectations and psychological well-being, and various results are in line with our hypotheses, the effects we found were not large. There seems to be a range of explanations for this. In general it is assumed that there is a relationship between parental expectations and the contact and support received from children. However, prior research has found only small effects or no effects at all on this relationship. Finch & Mason (1993), for example, have shown that the expectations that parents have are negotiated, indicating that they may no longer be perceived as expectations. Moreover, parents often justify why their children are unable to adhere to the expectations: they have their own lives, are busy working and have their own family. It may therefore be realistic to conclude that we will never find large effects.

The cross-sectional nature of this study also leaves some remaining issues, which could be improved upon. First, the issue of whether the associations between filial expectations and contact and support are a result of causal mechanisms or cognitive coping processes remains unresolved. However, even if we had longitudinal data on all crucial variables available, we have to keep in mind that both expectations and behavior within intergenerational relationships are formed within a lifetime process. Second, the causal relationship between contact and support received and psychological well-being also remains unresolved. It is expected that children react to a parent's loneliness by improving their contact and support. Also, as a result of coping, some parents might lower their filial expectations while others maintain their high level of expectations. Third, it may be that due to further cognitive coping processes, loneliness decreases over time when there is a discrepancy between parental expectations and contact and support from children.

Overall, the results of this study show that relationships between an older parent and adult child can have both beneficial and undesirable aspects. This supports the idea that parent-child relationships are ambivalent (Luescher & Pillemer, 1998), which results when incompatible normative expectations require contradictory attitudes and behaviors (Merton & Barber, 1963). The results of this study show that cognitive processes concerning filial expectations and actual social relationships play a role in the psychological well-being of older parents. However, we still do not know exactly how the underlying mechanisms that determine whether and when aging parents derive psychological benefits from contact and support received from children work. In this respect, we suggest that differentiation between dimensions of filial expectations and measures of psychological well-being might provide more insight into the relationship of psychological consequences with intergenerational contact and support.

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6 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

The present study examined the intergenerational relationships of older adults in the Netherlands at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century. As in most western countries, the Netherlands has witnessed a number of social and demographic changes during the last century that have had a major impact on the structure of families and the relationships between the generations. The increase in life expectancy and decrease in birth rate has led to smaller families and longer periods of shared lives of parents and children than ever before. Moreover, changes in marriage, divorce, and remarriage have led to an increase in the complexity of family structures. Against the background of these changes, this study has aimed to contribute to the existing empirical and theoretical body of knowledge on intergenerational relationships.

In contemporary scholarly debates on the relationship between the welfare state and family solidarity, the conceptualization of the family remains largely implicit. The notion that in the past, parents were supported more by their adult children is based on the assumption that the disintegration of the family is an artifact of modernization (Shanas, 1979; Hareven, 1995; Aboderin, 2004). This study examined various aspects of intergenerational relationships at the family level. Specifically, three dimensions of the intergenerational relationship of older adults were distinguished: (1) family structure, (2) patterns of contact, and (3) norms and expectations. These three dimensions have been translated into four research questions, which have guided the analyses in the previous empirical chapters. The study is concluded with a summary of the answers to the research questions, followed by a discussion of the resulting theoretical implications, directions for future research, and overall conclusions.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Studies in the field of sociology and social psychology have predominantly made use of the paradigm of intergenerational solidarity to study the relationships between parents and adult children (Roberts, Richards, & Bengtson, 1991). This multidimensional model, or paradigm, which describes different dimensions of the relationship between parent and adult children, has guided several studies that test the viability of the underlying mechanisms of intergenerational cohesion and integration (e.g., Daatland & Herlofson, 2003; Parrott & Bengtson, 1999; Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997). The research questions in this study focused on the role of family structure, contact and support exchange, and norms within the intergenerational relationship.

Influence of family structure and social structure on intergenerational relationships

The two research questions that focus on family structure and social structure and patterns of contact have been addressed in chapters 2 and 3.

To what extent does family structure have an effect on the contact between (step)parents and their adult biological children and stepchildren?

This question was addressed in Chapter 2, and the examination focused on the effect of family structure on the variation in contact between parents and biological children, and between stepparents and their stepchildren. Our findings show that, consistent with earlier research, parents have less contact with their stepchildren than with their biological children. More important, however, we observed differences in contact between (step)parents and biological and stepchildren according to different family structures. Three main types of families were distinguished. A “biological family” is a family where the couple only has biological children. A “complex stepfamily” can be defined as a family that is formed when parents, each with children from a prior union, start a new relationship. A “simple stepfamily” is a family formed when only one of the parents has children from a prior union. The results show that parents have more contact with their biological children in *biological* families than parents have with their biological children in stepfamilies. Moreover, parents perceived the contact with biological children to be more regular and important in complex stepfamilies than simple stepfamilies. The results suggest that within the complex stepfamilies parents may try to preserve existing relationships with biological children above the investment in a new stepchild relationship. No difference was found in the contact between stepparents and stepchildren in simple and complex stepfamilies. However, the contact with stepchildren was perceived as more often regular and important in simple stepfamilies in comparison to complex stepfamilies. The results suggest that there may be fewer competing ties within simple stepfamilies, enabling stepparents to invest more in the stepchild and become more emotionally close. From this chapter it can be concluded that aging (step)families are both diverse and complex. It is not so much the difference between biological and stepchildren that counts when studying the contact between (step)parents and (step)children, as what the structure of the aging (step)family is.

Has the frequency of contact and support exchanged in relationships between parents and adult children changed over individual time and over successive cohorts?

This question was addressed in Chapter 3, with the focus on the extent to which socio-structural trends that are recognizable at both the societal and the individual levels are related to contact and support exchange between parents and adult children. Specifically, we focused on three major trends: the increase in divorce, the increase of labor-force participation (in particular among women and among people of 55 years and over), and changes in geographical proximity in parent-child residential location (in particular the declining rate of

intergenerational cohabitation). It is assumed that in each of these domains the opportunities for intergenerational contact and exchange of support was affected. To assess changes between two cohorts, parents interviewed in 1992 were compared with those parents of the same age at the time of the interview conducted in 2002. To assess changes over time, changes were assessed over the ten years the continued parent-child relationships were studied. The results of the cohort analysis show that when the characteristics of parents, children, and the relationship are taken into account, there was more frequent contact between parents and their adult children in 2002 than in 1992. Moreover, supportive exchanges within the late cohort were equal to those within the early cohort or had increased. The results of the longitudinal analysis show that as parents age (from about 60 until they are around 70), there is less contact with their children and less support is exchanged. Overall, it can be concluded that the changes in contact and support exchange both between cohorts and longitudinally could only partially be explained by the individual consequences of divorce, labor-force participation, and geographical proximity. However, during the “empty-nest” phase, parents and adult children do devote less time to the intergenerational relationship.

Influence of norms on intergenerational relationships

The two research questions that focused on norms and expectations, and patterns of contact are addressed in chapters 4 and 5.

To what extent are there variations in the filial responsibility expectations of parents in later life?

This question was addressed in Chapter 4, and the focus of the analysis was on specific dimensions of filial expectations and the links between filial expectations and the situation of the adult children in the family. The construct and convergent validity of two measurement instruments, a vignette technique and item scale, were examined. Our findings show that older parents distinguish between emotional-, instrumental-, contact-, and information-oriented filial expectations. Specifically, older parents predominantly have emotional-oriented filial expectations and to a lesser extent instrumental-oriented filial expectations. The two instruments have a certain amount of overlap; however, the vignette technique provides additional information on the specific situations of the children. In this respect, the vignette technique showed that the adult child’s employment status, in particular, appears to influence the older parent’s expectations. The gender of the adult child or whether adult children have children of their own was found to be less important. Gender only played a role when an adjustment of the home or work situation was required. It can be concluded that the characteristics of the child incorporated into the vignettes added to the specificity of measurements of filial expectations. Moreover, the choice of measure of filial expectations depends largely on the focus and theoretical assumptions underlying the study at hand. While the item scale is valuable when it is important to distinguish between dimensions of filial

expectations, the vignette technique might be more useful to obtain information beyond the individual's current personal situation.

To what extent can the relationship between child contact and support and parental well-being be explained by filial expectations?

This question was addressed in Chapter 5, where the focus was on whether filial expectations have a moderating effect on the relationship between child contact and support and parental loneliness, on the one hand, and on the other hand, whether child contact and support mediate the association between filial expectations and parental loneliness. The findings show that the meaning that older parents attribute to child contact and the support received from children is partially based on conditional expectations. Child contact has a positive effect on parental loneliness only under the condition of high emotional expectations. Conversely, under the condition of low instrumental expectations, parents who receive instrumental support from children have a higher level of loneliness. Moreover, the findings show that the relationship between filial expectations and parental loneliness is direct rather than indirect via child contact and support. Interestingly, parents with emotional-oriented expectations are more socially lonely while parents with instrumental-oriented expectations are more emotionally lonely. From this chapter, it can be concluded that filial expectations are important in the relationship between child contact and support and the loneliness of older parents, but its importance is conditional or direct, rather than indirect.

DISCUSSION OF THE CONCEPT OF THE FAMILY

It is assumed that a strong welfare state reduces the willingness of families to support each other. In particular, proponents of reducing the size of the welfare state make use of these arguments within debates on current social policy. For example, at the beginning of 2007 the Social Support Act will come into effect in the Netherlands (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, 2006). The Act is the result of a shift in welfare policy due to globalization emphasizing individual responsibility in health care, on the insurance side as well as the provision of care. Moreover, a central assumption of the Act is that existing social relations, particularly in the family, will assume the responsibility of supporting people in need of support. It is, however, unclear how this new Act conceptualizes the family and to what extent the changes that have taken place within the family are taken into account. Indeed, while demographic changes have shown that the structure of the family is changing, insight into these changes does not give us information on the role of relationships within the family. The findings in this study suggest that if the welfare state appeals to the family to increasingly take care of aging parents, then the concept of the family will need to be updated. In the following text, we will elaborate on this idea, referring to the findings reported in the chapters 2 to 5.

The finding that parents have less contact with their stepchildren than with their biological children demonstrates the impact remarriage and repartnering has on the relationships within families (Chapter 2). That there is, on average, less contact between stepparents and stepchildren than within biological relationships is exactly what one would expect on the basis of the “nuclear family ideology” (Ganong & Coleman, 2004, p. 25), which views the nuclear family as an ideal standard. However, our findings also suggest that, depending on the structure of the stepfamily, stepparents might also have a relationship with their adult stepchildren comparable to that of biological children. Families and relationships between parents and adult children have become more complex, mainly due to changes that have taken place in the structure of families. Who is defined as a child depends on the structure and the relationships between parent and (step)children. The findings suggest that the issue is no longer about whether there is a difference between nuclear families and stepfamilies but what the difference in intergenerational relationships is, according to different family structures. Within the (step)family, it is therefore possible that both biological children and stepchildren may contribute to providing care for older stepparents.

The findings that parents with coresiding adult children exchange more support than those who do not coreside confirms that the process of a child leaving the parental home is a major transition in the parent’s life (Chapter 3). However, the findings also show that although parents coreside less, adult children and their parents more often live nearby than they did a decade ago, confirming that contact and support exchange between parents and adult children goes beyond the nuclear family. This may be explained by the attitudes that exist towards intergenerational coresidence and institutional care. In comparison to other European countries, in the Netherlands, parents staying at home and receiving visits is more of an option than coresidence with children (Tomassini et al. 2004). Clearly, therefore, the family extends beyond the household of the older parent, with adult children maintaining contact and exchanging support.

There was only partial support in this study for the hypothesis that social and demographic changes with respect to being divorced or being employed reduce opportunities for contact and support exchange between parents and their adult children (Chapter 3). This conclusion challenges the predominant hypothesis of family decline and raises questions which alternative explanations are more likely to explain changes in the contact and support exchange between parents and their adult children.

Cultural explanations focusing on value changes within families may provide a more promising explanation. The increase in contact and support exchanged between the parents and children in the late cohort might be a result of changes that have taken place in the attitudes and behavior of that cohort. Part of the late cohort can be characterized as the protest generation, who underwent the cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s (Sanders & Becker, 1994). The attitudes and behavior of this generation are guided more by principles of equality and autonomy, and consequently, the relationships might be based more on individual choice

and negotiation than “fixed obligations” (Stacey, 1993). An important characteristic of negotiation is intensive communication about differing opinions among parents and children (Du Bois-Reymond, 1998), which might result in more contact. However, alternative explanations for the above-mentioned findings cannot be ruled out, such as technological advances that allow new forms of communication. In particular, frequency of contact is no longer confined to face-to-face and telephone contact but also includes other forms of contact such as mobile telephoning and e-mailing.

The observed decline in contact and support exchange as parents age from about 60 to around 70 (Chapter 3) suggests that the assumption that contact and support exchange between parents and adult children declines over individual time is genuine. However, the findings of both the cohort and longitudinal analysis also suggest that this might only hold for certain periods during the life course. In each individual’s life, there are periods during which more or less contact and support is exchanged. Riley and Riley (1993) have labeled this ebb and flow of intergenerational support as the *latent kinship matrix*: a network of family members who alternate between being potential support providers and being actual providers of support. Earlier research confirms that both parents and adult children devote less time and energy to intergenerational relationships during the “empty-nest” phase, when children go through the transition from youth to adulthood and become more independent (Aquilino, 1997). Therefore, these findings suggest, on the one hand, that the “good old days” are not periods in our social history but, rather, a period in the history of each individual and family, and on the other hand, that the family will be characterized by intermittent forms of support between generations, separated by periods of relative autonomy.

The observed relationship between parental filial expectations and the family structure of adult children suggest that, as a general norm, there is less agreement on how strongly the normative prescriptions should apply; however, within specific situations, the conditionality of filial expectations becomes clearer (Chapter 4). This finding further confirms the ideas of Finch and Mason (1990) that family norms are better seen as guidelines than as concrete rules, and that filial expectations change as individual situations and social conditions change. The conditionality of filial expectations was also observed in the relationship between child contact and support and parental well-being (Chapter 5). The finding that child contact and support does not always have a positive effect on parental well-being suggests that there may be tension between the two poles of dependence and autonomy regarding intergenerational relationships, which can generate ambivalence (Lüscher & Pillemer, 1998; Pillemer & Suitor, 2002). Norms of independence mandate that adults assume responsibility for their own well-being (Lye, 1996). At the same time, an apparently conflicting norm of obligation exists, which mandates that adult children and parents should assist and care for each other over the life course (Lye, 1996). Families may deal differently with these two conflicting norms. Pyke and Bengtson (1996) describe two family systems: collectivist families, where emphasis is placed on kinship ties and familial responsibilities, and individualistic families, where there is

more emphasis on independence and loose kinship ties. Collectivist families will be able to take on additional support better than individualistic families.

The finding that a distinction between the gender of the child was made only when a specific adjustment of the home or work situation was required points to the possibility that the idea of the family as gender-segregated is disappearing (i.e., employed daughters are treated as employed sons (Chapter 4). Although the female employment rate in the Netherlands is higher than the European Union average, the major contribution of extended female employment stems primarily from an increase in part-time work. At the beginning of this century, the proportion of women working part-time in the Netherlands was the highest among western countries (Social and Cultural Planning Office, 2000). Evidence from our study shows that, compared to full-time employment, part-time employment of a child had a positive effect on the support parents received from their children (Chapter 3). Part-time work enables women to combine the tasks of work and support; however, this may change in the future if full-time employment of women increases further in the Netherlands. Currently, the government is encouraging women to participate more in the employment market. As a result, in the future, daughters may find it increasingly difficult to adhere to the expectations of their aging parents. In this respect, stimulating an increase in female labor participation seems to be contradictory to the central objective of the Social Support Act, which aims to encourage family responsibility to support people in need of care.

To summarize, within the debate on the relationship between the welfare state and the family, the concept of the family needs to be updated. The modified extended family is still the modal form of the family of older adults, but in recent decades its structure and geographical range have changed, as well as the contact and filial expectations within these family relationships.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A number of issues and questions have arisen from this study, which could be elaborated on in future research. First, there are some issues that emerge from the data limitations of the study. To examine the intergenerational relationships of older adults, data that consisted predominantly of older Dutch adults were used. Older adults with or without Dutch nationality but born and raised abroad were nearly absent in the sample. The sample was selected in 1992 (Knipscheer et al. 1995) when the migrant population aged 55 years and older in the Netherlands was still comparatively small. Therefore, only limited information was available on the intergenerational relationships of older migrant adults in the Netherlands. In the period between 1990 and 2000, the number of older people of non-Dutch origin has doubled from 30,000 to 75,000 (Social and Cultural Planning Office, 2000). Given that the forecast for 2015 will be approximately 228,000 older people of non-Dutch origin, there is a growing need to study intergenerational differences between aging families of Dutch and non-

Dutch origin. The cultural traditions of migrant groups may differ in their filial expectations and child contact and support exchange. Future research could further address the influence of structural changes on the intergenerational relationships of older adults of non-Dutch origin and make comparisons with the intergenerational relationships of older Dutch adults.

In this study, we analyzed data that were collected from older individuals themselves, and in the study reported in Chapter 2, information was only available for one of the parents. To gain a more complete picture of intergenerational relationships, data from two other sources—the partner and the children—should also be analyzed. The contact between stepparent and stepchild may well be influenced by the extent to which the partner and, therefore, biological parent has contact with the biological child. Future research may also address the influence of remarriage on the relationship between biological and stepchildren more conclusively. In particular, data containing full partner histories for both spouses would be ideal.

Concerning the perspective of the children, as explained in Chapter 3, prior research has shown that parents and adult children can have different perspectives on the same relationship (Aquilino, 1999; Antonucci & Israel, 1985; Klein Ikkink & Van Tilburg, 1999). In this regard, the generational stake theory emphasizes that each generation has a different investment in the generational bond: parents strive to maintain intergenerational continuity and children aim to maximize a sense of separate identity (Acock & Bengtson, 1980). Apart from different perspectives on the same relationships, prior research has also shown that parents differentiate among their adult children regarding support exchange (Sutor, Pillemer, & Sechrist, 2006). Future research could further address the issue of divergent perspectives in families. In particular, a study analyzing the filial expectations of more than one generation and within-family differentiation regarding filial expectations would be of interest.

Alongside the issues that have emerged from data limitations, there are also new questions that have arisen from this study. As mentioned above, the theoretical implications of the present study offer some new directions for future research. Since social and demographic changes do not seem to have had a profound negative effect on parent-child relationships, future research could focus on the role of attitudes towards the family in changes within intergenerational relationships. In this respect, the family as a system may have its own impact on the behavior and, subsequently, the well-being of its individual members (Knipscheer & Van Tilburg, 2003). Using a qualitative research design, Pyke and Bengtson (1996) have shown that a distinction can be made between collectivist families and individualistic families. A relevant question for future research would be whether there are differences in the contact and support exchange between parents and adult children within collectivist families and individualist families. This may be done preferably in both a longitudinal and cohort-sequential design.

Within the current study, older adults were predominantly healthy and independent. Another suggestion for future research would be to look more closely at older adults who have become more dependent and who need care. Future research may want to corroborate our findings and examine the process of increasing dependency and the contact and support exchange between parents and adult children. Moreover, it would be of interest to conduct a comparable analysis on changes in contact and support exchange over individual and historical time among an older sample with a number of people facing health problems. Furthermore, whereas many stepparents in this study had regular contact with their stepchildren, an important question for future research is to what extent aging stepparents will actually be able to depend on their (step)children for support when they become more dependent and actually need care. Finally, it would be interesting to see whether filial expectations are influenced by a decrease in the physical capacity of older parents. Even if parents have filial expectations, when they become more dependent, they may no longer actually expect their children to support and care for them.

A last suggestion for future research would be to elaborate on the findings regarding broken relationships between older parents and adult children. Although the findings from this study show that in general older parents and adult children have frequent contact and exchange support, there may also be parents who do not have a lot of contact with their children, or the relationship may be completely broken. Moreover, the findings of our study also suggest that some parents have low filial expectations, which might, on the one hand, indicate a desire for a certain amount of autonomy in the relationship with adult children or, on the other hand, demonstrate a structural weakness in the relationship that may have evolved over the years. Alongside the concept of solidarity in studying the relationship between parents and adult children, concepts of ambivalence and conflict are increasingly receiving attention (Bengtson et al., 2002). To gain more insight into the intergenerational relationships of older adults, it would be worthwhile to examine those relationships that have declined over time or which have been completely broken off, in particular, the conditions under which stepchildren do not have contact with their stepparents, and parents who have no filial expectations and no contact with their children. The role of ambivalence and conflict within intergenerational relationships could be examined by the application of the vignette technique, which enables more insight into complex situations. The vignette technique also has the advantage that the characteristics used in the situation can be systematically varied, and changes over time can be built into the hypothetical situation with questions focusing on what should happen next.

INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS OF OLDER ADULTS

This study originated from the observation that society has undergone changes that have had an impact on the intergenerational relationships of older adults. Developments such as the increase in life expectancy, rise in divorce and remarriage, and decrease in coresidence have made the family more diverse and complex. A common assumption is that the functions of the family have been eroded by the development of the welfare state. The findings of this study show that irrespective of social and demographic changes, parents and adult children had more contact with each other and exchanged more emotional support in 2002 than in 1992; moreover, depending on the structure of the family, parents have diverse relationships with their (step)children. Changes in contact and support exchange, therefore, have to be accounted for by other explanations such as changes that may have taken place in attitudes towards the family.

Social and demographic changes and the expansion of the welfare state have also fueled concerns about the erosion of filial norms and the extent to which adult children are still able and willing to fulfill the filial expectations of older parents. The findings of this study show that these concerns are unwarranted. To a certain extent, filial norms are shared by older parents; however, only within specific situations does the conditionality of the expectations become clear. The conditionality of filial expectations was also found in the relationship between child contact and support and parental well-being. Child contact and support can have both a positive and a negative effect on parental well-being, depending on whether parents have high or low filial expectations.

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SAMENVATTING

INTERGENERATIONELE RELATIES VAN OUDEREN

INLEIDING

Nederland was de vorige eeuw, zoals zoveel westerse landen, getuige van een aantal sociale en demografische veranderingen die grote invloed hadden op familiestructuren en de relaties tussen generaties. Een toenemende levensverwachting en afnemend geboortecijfer leidden tot kleinere families, en tot ouders en kinderen die hun levens langer dan ooit tevoren samen doorbrengen. Tegelijkertijd maken veranderingen binnen het huwelijk, scheidingen en hertrouw dat familiestructuren complexer worden. Dit onderzoek probeert, tegen de achtergrond van deze veranderingen, de bestaande empirische en theoretische kennis over intergenerationele relaties aan te vullen.

Binnen de huidige wetenschappelijke en politieke debatten over de verantwoordelijkheden van de welvaartstaat en de familie ten aanzien van ouderen, blijft de conceptualisatie van de familie grotendeels impliciet. Soms wordt gedacht dat ouders in het verleden meer dan tegenwoordig werden gesteund door hun volwassen kinderen. Deze gedachte past bij de veronderstelling dat de desintegratie van de familie veroorzaakt wordt door de modernisering (Shanas, 1979; Hareven, 1995; Aboderin, 2004). Verondersteld wordt dat de welvaartstaat taken heeft overgenomen die de familie niet meer wil of kan uitvoeren.

In deze studie staan de relaties tussen ouderen en hun volwassen kinderen aan het eind van de 20^e en begin van de 21^e eeuw centraal. Wij onderzoeken ouders en kinderen die in de onderzochte periode volwassen zijn. De studie richt zich op zelfstandig wonende ouders van 55 jaar en ouder. Hun kinderen zijn ongeveer tussen 25 en 65 jaar oud. Het doel van het onderzoek is inzicht te krijgen in de condities waaronder ouders en hun kinderen onderling contact hebben en steun uitwisselen. Het onderzoek is opgebouwd rond een aantal specifieke thema's die gekozen zijn vanwege hun belang voor de huidige relaties tussen ouderen en hun volwassen kinderen: familiestructuur, patronen van contact, en normen. Met betrekking tot familiestructuur richt het onderzoek zich op verschillende vormen van stieffamilies. Patronen van contact hebben betrekking op zowel contactfrequentie als de steun die uitgewisseld wordt tussen ouders en volwassen kinderen. Het thema normen richt zich op de zorgverwachtingen van ouders ten aanzien van hun volwassen kinderen. De vier onderzoeksvragen van deze studie zijn:

1. In hoeverre heeft de familiestructuur effect op het contact tussen (stief)ouders en hun biologische kinderen en stiefkinderen?
2. Is de frequentie van contact en de steun die uitgewisseld wordt binnen de relaties tussen ouders en hun kinderen veranderd gedurende (een deel van) hun leven? Zijn er verschillen tussen cohorten van ouderen?
3. In hoeverre zijn er variaties in de zorgverwachtingen die ouderen hebben van hun volwassen kinderen?

4. Wat is in de verklaring van verschillen in welbevinden de betekenis van contactfrequentie en ontvangen steun, en van zorgverwachtingen van ouders? Meer specifiek, in hoeverre hebben zorgverwachtingen een mediërende en modifierend effect?

OPZET VAN HET ONDERZOEK EN DATA

De relaties tussen ouderen en hun volwassen kinderen zijn onderzocht met behulp van data uit twee studies: “Leefvormen en Sociale Netwerken (LSN) en het longitudinale vervolg “Longitudinal Aging Study Amsterdam”(LASA). Dit zijn grootschalige studies onder de Nederlandse bevolking van 55 jaar en ouder. Het LSN-survey richt zich vooral op de demografische en sociale eigenschappen van ouderen, terwijl LASA zich vooral richt op de vier domeinen van functioneren: sociaal, emotioneel, fysiek en cognitief. We gebruiken de LSN-data om de invloed van de familiestructuur op het contact tussen ouderen en hun volwassen biologische en stiefkinderen te onderzoeken (hoofdstuk 2). Om zowel de longitudinale als cohortveranderingen in contact te onderzoeken, gebruiken we de data van een nieuwe cohort van 55 tot 64 jaar (2002; LASA) samen met de cohort uit de 1992 datacollectie (LSN) en de longitudinale vervolgmeting door LASA in 2002 (hoofdstuk 3).

De LASA-data gebruiken we om de invloed van zorgverwachtingen op ouder-kind relaties te onderzoeken (hoofdstuk 4 en 5). De data bevatten informatie over de zorgverwachtingen van ouderen, te weten een vignet- en itemschaal en specifieke eigenschappen van alle kinderen en hun relaties met hun ouders.

INVLOED VAN FAMILIESTRUCTUUR EN SOCIALE STRUCTUUR OP INTERGENERATIONELE RELATIES

In hoofdstuk 2 onderzoeken we in hoeverre de familiestructuur van invloed is op het contact tussen ouders en hun biologische en stiefkinderen. We maken onderscheid tussen een biologische familie waarbij ouders alleen biologische kinderen hebben; een ‘complexe’ stieffamilie waarbij ouders, ieder met eigen kinderen uit een eerdere relatie, een nieuwe relatie starten; en een ‘simpele’ stieffamilie waarin één van de ouders kinderen uit een eerdere relatie heeft. In beide typen stieffamilies kan het voorkomen dat uit de nieuwe partnerrelatie kinderen zijn geboren. De resultaten laten zien dat het niet zozeer gaat om het verschil tussen biologische en stiefkinderen, maar eerder om de structuur van de (stief)familie. Ouders in biologische families hebben meer contact met hun biologische kinderen dan ouders in stieffamilies hebben met hun biologische kinderen. Bovendien is het contact met biologische kinderen regelmatig en wordt het belangrijker gevonden in biologische families en in complexe stieffamilies dan in simpele stieffamilies. Dit suggereert dat ouders in stieffamilies

minder contact hebben met zowel hun biologische als hun stiefkinderen. Mogelijk is dit terug te voeren op de oorspronkelijke breuk tussen de biologische ouders waardoor spanningen en gebrekkige emotionele banden kunnen ontstaan in de familie. Hier tegenover staat dat ouders in complexe stiefgezinnen de relatie met hun biologische kinderen zoveel mogelijk proberen te behouden en boven een investering in een nieuwe relatie met een stiefkind plaatsen. Het gevolg is dat verbondenheid met zowel hun biologische als hun stiefkinderen beperkt wordt. Wij vonden geen verschil tussen simpele en complexe gezinnen wat betreft de frequentie van het contact tussen stiefouders en stiefkinderen. Echter, stiefouders in simpele stieffamilies beoordelen het contact met hun stiefkinderen als regelmatig en belangrijker dan stiefouders in complexe stieffamilies. Dit suggereert dat er minder concurrentie bestaat in de relaties in simpele stieffamilies, waardoor deze stiefouders gemakkelijker kunnen investeren in hun stiefkinderen en een sterkere emotioneel band met hen kunnen opbouwen.

In hoofdstuk 3 doen we verslag van het onderzoek naar in hoeverre de individuele gevolgen van sociale veranderingen van invloed zijn op het contact en de steun tussen ouders en hun volwassen kinderen. Hierbij gaan we na in hoeverre het contact en de uitgewisselde steun verandert over individuele tijd (het leven van de betrokken personen) en over historische tijd (waarbij we verschillende cohorten van ouderen vergelijken) heen. We maken onderscheid tussen drie sociale veranderingen die van invloed kunnen zijn op het contact en de steunuitwisseling tussen ouders en hun kinderen: een scheiding, veranderende arbeidsparticipatie (vooral onder vrouwen en 55-plussers) en verandering in de geografische afstand tussen ouders en kinderen. Om veranderingen in de historische tijd te onderzoeken, vergelijken we het cohort van ouders die in 1992 zijn geïnterviewd met het cohort van ouders van dezelfde leeftijd die in 2002 zijn geïnterviewd. Om veranderingen over de individuele tijd te onderzoeken volgen we de veranderingen in contact en steunuitwisseling sinds 1992 gedurende een periode van tien jaar. De resultaten van de cohortanalyse laten zien dat - wanneer we rekening hebben gehouden met verschillen in ouder-, kinder- en relatiekenmerken - er in 2002 vaker contact is tussen ouders en hun kinderen dan in 1992. Tevens, is de steunuitwisseling gelijk of toegenomen voor het 2002 cohort in vergelijking met het vroegere cohort. De resultaten suggereren dat houdingsveranderingen ten aanzien van de familie misschien meer effect hebben op ouder-kind relaties dan sociale veranderingen zoals de toename van vrouwelijke arbeidsparticipatie of een toenemend aantal scheidingen en hertrouw. De resultaten van de longitudinale analyse laten zien dat ouders met het ouder worden (van ongeveer 60 tot 70 jaar) minder vaak contact hebben met hun kinderen (die van een gemiddelde leeftijd van 30 jaar naar gemiddeld 40 jaar gaan) en dat minder steun wordt uitgewisseld. Het idee dat contact en steun afneemt in de tijd is dus maar gedeeltelijk waar. Het betreft mogelijk specifieke perioden in het individuele leven, zoals wanneer kinderen onafhankelijker worden en de transitie van jong volwassene naar volwassene met een gezin doormaken. Het onderzoek geeft geen aanwijzingen voor een afname van contact en steun in de historische tijd.

INVLOED VAN NORMEN OP INTERGENERATIONELE RELATIES

In hoofdstuk 4 bestuderen we in hoeverre er variaties zijn in de zorgverwachtingen van ouderen ten aanzien van hun kinderen. Het doel van het onderzoek is specifieke dimensies van zorgverwachtingen te onderscheiden en inzicht te krijgen in de relatie tussen zorgverwachtingen en de specifieke situatie van volwassen kinderen in de familie. De construct- en convergentvaliditeit van twee meetinstrumenten, een itemschaal en een vignetschaal, zijn onderzocht. Aan de hand van de itemschaal blijkt dat ouders onderscheid maken tussen emotioneel-, instrumenteel-, contact-, en informatiegeoriënteerde zorgverwachtingen. Ouders hebben vooral hoge emotioneel georiënteerde verwachtingen. Instrumenteel georiënteerde verwachtingen komen het minst voor. Het vignet geeft extra informatie over de specifieke situaties van de kinderen. Zo laat het vignet zien dat vooral de arbeidsparticipatie van de kinderen van invloed is op de zorgverwachtingen van ouderen. De sekse van het kind en de aanwezigheid van kleinkinderen worden minder belangrijk gevonden. Een onderscheid in sekse wordt alleen gemaakt wanneer een aanpassing van de thuis- of arbeidssituatie nodig is. Met andere woorden, ouders hebben dezelfde verwachtingen van hun dochters en zonen, behalve als de thuis- of arbeidssituatie aangepast moet worden. Geconcludeerd kan worden dat de in het vignet opgenomen kenmerken van de kinderen bijdragen aan de specificiteit van de meting van zorgverwachtingen. De twee gebruikte instrumenten hebben inhoudelijk enige overlap. De keuze van het meetinstrument hangt af van het doel en van de theoretische assumpties van het onderzoek. De itemschaal is waardevol kan zijn wanneer men onderscheid wil maken tussen dimensies van zorgverwachtingen, het vignet is geschikt voor het verkrijgen van informatie die verder reikt dan de individuele situatie van een persoon.

Hoofdstuk 5 gaat in op het welbevinden van ouders. Ten eerste onderzoeken we in hoeverre zorgverwachtingen een modererend effect hebben op de relatie tussen de frequentie van het contact en de ontvangen steun enerzijds en ervaren eenzaamheid van de ouders anderzijds. Ten tweede onderzoeken we in hoeverre de frequentie van contact en de ontvangen steun mediëren in de relatie tussen de zorgverwachtingen en eenzaamheid van ouders.

De resultaten van de analyses laten zien dat de betekenis die ouders toekennen aan het contact en de ontvangen steun van hun kinderen gebaseerd is op conditionele verwachtingen. In vergelijking tot ouders met lage emotioneel georiënteerde verwachtingen zijn ouders met hoge verwachtingen en een hoge contactfrequentie met hun kinderen minder emotioneel eenzaam. Verder zien wij dat onder ouders met lage instrumenteel georiënteerde verwachtingen er een positiever effect is van de intensiteit van de ontvangen instrumentele steun dan onder ouders met hoge instrumenteel georiënteerde verwachtingen. De resultaten suggereren enerzijds dat de standaarden aangepast worden aan de werkelijkheid, terwijl men

anderzijds ook tevreden kan zijn met lage standaarden. Wanneer ouders met lage verwachtingen toch steun ontvangen, leidt dit tot een sterkere eenzaamheid. Het is mogelijk dat deze ouders onafhankelijk willen zijn van hun sociaal netwerk en dat ze de ontvangen steun zien als een schending van hun beeld van hun eigen zelfstandig functioneren.

De resultaten van het mediërende effect van contact en ontvangen steun laten zien dat het verband tussen zorgverwachtingen en eenzaamheid vooral direct is en in mindere mate indirect via contact met en ontvangen steun van kinderen. Ouders met hogere emotioneel georiënteerde verwachtingen zijn meer sociaal eenzaam dan ouders met lagere emotioneel georiënteerde verwachtingen, en ouders met hoge instrumenteel georiënteerd verwachtingen zijn meer emotioneel eenzaam dan ouders met lage instrumenteel georiënteerd verwachtingen. De frequentie van het contact en de intensiteit van de ontvangen steun van kinderen dragen weinig bij aan het inzichtelijk maken van deze effecten van verwachtingen. Instrumentele georiënteerde verwachtingen richten zich op hulp en directe zorg van kinderen. De resultaten suggereren dat kinderen van invloed kunnen zijn op zowel de emotionele als de sociale eenzaamheid van hun ouders. Het is mogelijk dat ouders met instrumenteel georiënteerde verwachtingen zich meer afhankelijk voelen van kinderen waaraan ze meer gehecht zijn, waardoor ze zich meer emotioneel eenzaam gaan voelen. Geconcludeerd kan worden dat zorgverwachtingen belangrijk zijn voor de relatie tussen het contact met en de steun van kinderen enerzijds en de eenzaamheid van ouders anderzijds. Dit belang is echter conditioneel of direct, en niet indirect.

HET CONCEPT FAMILIE

Door sommigen wordt verondersteld dat de bereidheid van families om elkaar te ondersteunen in een hoog ontwikkelde welvaartstaat afneemt. Dit betekent dat het concept 'familie' vernieuwd moet worden wanneer in de toekomst meer dan tegenwoordig beroep wordt gedaan op de familie om ouderen te ondersteunen. De relaties tussen ouders en hun volwassen kinderen zijn immers meer complex geworden, vooral door veranderingen in familiestructuren. Desondanks blijkt dat binnen de (stief)familie, veel ouders het contact, met zowel volwassen biologische kinderen als volwassen stiefkinderen, als regelmatig en belangrijk ervaren. Verder concluderen we dat de familie verder reikt dan het huishouden van de ouders. Ondanks dat ouders en hun volwassen kinderen tegenwoordig minder vaak bij elkaar in huis wonen dan vroeger, bijvoorbeeld tien jaar geleden, wonen ze nu dichterbij elkaar en onderhouden ze op die manier contact en wisselen ze steun uit. De waargenomen toename in contact en steunuitwisseling tussen ouders en hun volwassen kinderen over de cohorten heen gaat in tegen de gangbare hypothese van afnemende familiebanden. Mogelijk zijn de veranderingen in de houding ten aanzien van de familie van groter invloed en is de nadruk meer op gelijkheid en autonomie komen te liggen, en zijn relaties meer gebaseerd op

individuele keuze en overleg dan op de structurele omstandigheden. De afname in contact en steunuitwisseling over de individuele tijd heen laat zien dat ‘de goede oude dag’ geen sociaal historische periode omvat, maar een periode in de persoonlijke geschiedenis van ieder individu en familie. De familie wordt in haar levensloop gekenmerkt door perioden van steunuitwisseling tussen de generaties, afgewisseld met perioden van relatieve autonomie. De gevonden relatie tussen zorgverwachtingen van ouders en de familiestructuur van kinderen laat zien dat binnen specifieke situaties het voorwaardelijke karakter van de zorgverwachtingen duidelijker wordt. De zorgverwachtingen van ouders veranderen wanneer de individuele situaties van de kinderen veranderen. Tevens weerspiegelt het (geconditioneerde) negatieve effect van contact en ontvangen steun van kinderen op het welbevinden van ouderen de ambivalentie in de intergenerationele relatie, waar afhankelijkheid en onafhankelijkheid op gespannen voet met elkaar staan. In algemene zin concluderen we dat het concept familie in het debat over de relatie tussen de welvaartstaat en de familie vernieuwd moet worden. Het gezin wordt nog steeds gezien als de modale familievorm van ouderen, terwijl de structuur, het contact en de normen binnen ouder-kind relaties veranderen.

SUGGESTIES VOOR TOEKOMSTIG ONDERZOEK

Om intergenerationele relaties te onderzoeken gebruikten we data die voornamelijk afkomstig waren van Nederlandse ouderen. Ouderen met of zonder de Nederlandse nationaliteit die elders zijn geboren of zijn opgevoed, ontbreken grotendeels in de steekproef. De steekproef is in 1992 geselecteerd toen de 55-plus migrantenpopulatie in Nederland nog vrij klein was. De onderhavige studie heeft dan ook weinig informatie beschikbaar over de intergenerationele relaties van migrantenouderen in Nederland. Het aantal ouderen van niet-Nederlandse afkomst is tussen 1990 en 2002 meer dan verdubbeld, van 30,000 naar 75,000 (Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, 2000). De voorspelling is dat Nederland in 2015 ongeveer 228,000 ouderen van niet-Nederlandse afkomst zal tellen. Er zal derhalve meer behoefte zijn aan kennis van de intergenerationele relaties van oudere families van niet-Nederlandse afkomst. De culturele tradities van migrantengroepen rondom zorgverwachtingen, contact en steunuitwisselingen kunnen anders zijn dan die van Nederlandse ouderen. Toekomstig onderzoek naar de invloed van structurele veranderingen op ouderen van niet-Nederlandse afkomst en een vergelijking met de intergenerationele relaties van Nederlandse ouderen is derhalve gewenst.

De data voor deze studie is alleen afkomstig van ouderen zelf. Een meer compleet beeld van intergenerationele relaties kan verkregen worden door ook data te analyseren van twee andere bronnen: de partner en de kinderen. Het contact tussen stiefouder en stiefkind wordt immers mogelijk beïnvloed door de partner en door het contact tussen de biologische

ouder en het biologische kind. Toekomstig onderzoek kan ook aandacht besteden aan de invloed van hertrouwen op de relatie tussen biologische en stiefkinderen.

Naast de voorgaande suggesties voor nieuw onderzoek die voortkomen uit methodologische beperkingen, zijn er ook nieuwe vragen die uit de studie voortkomen. Omdat de sociale en demografische veranderingen weinig negatief effect hebben op ouder-kind relaties, kan toekomstig onderzoek zich richten op het effect van de houding ten aanzien van de familie op veranderingen in intergenerationele relaties. Pyke en Bengtson (1996) laten in een kwalitatief onderzoek zien dat onderscheid gemaakt kan worden tussen meer collectivistische families en individualistische families. Een relevante vraag zou zijn of er verschillen bestaan tussen collectivistisch en individualistische families wat betreft het contact en de steunuitwisseling tussen ouders en hun volwassen kinderen.

Binnen de huidige studie zijn de ouderen voornamelijk gezond en onafhankelijk. Verder onderzoek kan zich richten op ouderen die behoefte hebben aan zorg en die meer afhankelijk zijn. Tevens kan aandacht besteed worden aan verbroken relaties tussen ouders en hun volwassen kinderen. Ook al zien wij in deze studie dat ouders en kinderen regelmatig contact hebben en regelmatig steun uitwisselen, er zullen ook ouders zijn die weinig contact hebben met hun kinderen of bij wie de relatie verbroken is. Om meer inzicht te krijgen in intergenerationele relaties van ouderen is het interessant ook deze relaties te onderzoeken, en, meer specifiek, na te gaan welke kenmerken karakteristiek zijn voor stiefouders die geen contact hebben met hun stiefkinderen en voor ouders zonder zorgverwachtingen die geen contact hebben met hun kinderen. De rol van ambivalentie en conflict in intergenerationele relaties kan onderzocht worden door middel van het vignet. Hiermee kunnen complexe situaties onderzocht worden waarbij de kenmerken systematisch gevarieerd worden, en veranderingen over de tijd verwerkt worden in de hypothetische situatie waarbij de vragen zich richten op wat er vervolgens moet gebeuren.

INTERGENERATIONELE RELATIES VAN OUDEREN

De bevindingen in onze studie tonen aan dat ouders en hun volwassen kinderen, ondanks de sociale en demografische veranderingen, in 2002 meer contact met elkaar hebben en meer emotionele steun uitwisselen dan in 1992. Wel is het zo dat gedurende een bepaalde periode in het individuele leven van de ouder - tussen ongeveer 60 en 70 jaar - het contact en steunuitwisseling minder wordt. Stieffamilies zijn op latere leeftijd veelal divers en complex. Hierdoor is het mogelijk dat ouders binnen stieffamilies minder contact hebben met zowel hun biologische als hun stiefkinderen. Of ouders meer of minder contact met hun kinderen hebben, is echter vooral afhankelijk van de structuur van het (stief)gezin. Verder blijkt dat de meeste ouderen zorgverwachtingen hebben ten aanzien van hun kinderen. Deze verwachtingen zijn voorwaardelijk, maar die voorwaardelijkheid wordt alleen in specifieke

situaties duidelijk. Daarbij blijkt vooral de arbeidsparticipatie van kinderen van invloed te zijn op de zorgverwachtingen van ouders. Dit conditionele karakter van de zorgverwachtingen komt ook tot uiting in de relatie tussen contact en steunuitwisseling enerzijds en het welbevinden van ouders anderzijds, en is afhankelijk van de mate waarin ouders een hoge of lage zorgverwachting hebben.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Suzan van der Pas was born in 's Hertogenbosch, the Netherlands, on October 23, 1970. She spent most of her youth living abroad in South Africa and New Zealand, and went to high school in Rotorua, New Zealand. After returning to the Netherlands in 1985, she obtained her secondary school diploma at the Christelijk College Nassau Veluwe in Harderwijk in 1989. She went on to study Nursing (HBO-V) at the Hogeschool van Nijmegen and obtained her Bachelor's degree in 1993. Subsequently, Suzan began a study in Sociology at the University of Amsterdam where she graduated in August 1996. During the following year Suzan took part in a Socrates program and gained her second Master's degree in European Comparative Family Studies in Leuven, Belgium in 1997. In March 1999, she started as a PhD student at the Department of Social Cultural Sciences, Vrije Universiteit (VU) in Amsterdam, where she conducted research on intergenerational relationships of older adults, the results of which are presented in this thesis. She completed a postdoctoral training program for PhD students at the Interuniversity Research Institute for Psychology and Health. During her PhD project (2000-2006) she also worked as a lecturer for the Department of Social Cultural Sciences, giving courses on 'Gerontology and Geriatrics' and 'Future of Health Care Systems in the Netherlands and Europe'.

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